

Year C – Second Sunday in Lent – March 16, 2025

Pastor Megan Floyd

Luke 13:31-35

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

Grace and peace to you from God, who is faithful and true, and from Jesus Christ, our Mother hen, who fiercely protects and provides for us. Amen.

Have you ever been chased by an angry chicken?

I have not... the only animals I grew up around were dogs and cats, and the occasional fish... so I do not have much experience with chickens.

And because of my lack of experience, I used to miss much of the nuance of this passage from Luke... I didn't quite understand the intensity of the creature to which Jesus compares himself.

I mean... it's a chicken. Not exactly scary, right? Chickens are famous for being... well... chicken... they're scared of everything!

Well... so then... one of my friends who raises chickens set me right.

Yes... they are scared of everything... until you threaten their babies.

A mother hen is gentle and nurturing to her brood. She provides for them, and gathers them under her feathers, sheltering them and keeping them warm.

But when her babies are in danger, she will not hesitate to go after the threat with fierceness and tenacity.

She will go to great lengths to protect her vulnerable baby chicks... even if it costs her... her life.

God... as a fierce Mother hen... it's a surprisingly beautiful way to understand who God is in Jesus... but not exactly what the early disciples really hoped for... or expected in a messiah.

...and I think it's still that way for many people today.

God's people had long awaited a conquering hero... a king who would overthrow the empire and crush those who were crushing them.

And instead... we got Jesus. Not a brave warrior, but a poor, gentle Rabbi who insisted on hanging out with all the wrong people.

Jesus was not a powerful ruler who would destroy our enemies... but a suffering messiah who calls upon us to love them.

We think the strongman is the better deal... we are so conditioned to believe that the powerful and brash leader is the one who will save us...

But only the one who was crucified on the cross ...has the power to save.

Jesus knew the forces of the empire were against him... he knew that his mission would end in death.

But just like a Mother hen, Jesus was willing to face death – even death on a cross – in order to protect us... protect us from ourselves and our own sin...

and provide for us... provide the salvation that can only come from God.

Jesus was willing to face death... because Jesus is God, and God promised long before... that we would always be God's beloved children... and God is faithful to God's promises.

God made this covenant with our ancestors, Abram and Sarai... we are God's people...

Even Abram doubted though... the scene we read today from Genesis describes one such moment of doubt.

Abram laments because the promised future has not yet come to pass, but God reassures him... and Abram believes.

But God takes this even further... God instructs Abram to bring animals for a ritual, and cut them in half, and lay them out, each side facing the other.

And then God... passed through between the cut animals... to secure the covenant.

You've heard the expression... to "cut a covenant" or "cut a deal" ...yes? ...this is where it comes from.

The one who passes through demonstrates that they will fulfill their promise, and if they falter... then let happen to them what has happened to these animals.

God promised to Abram and Sarai that they would be the ancestors to a great multitude of people... and that they would be God's children forever... under God's care and provision.

And so, God passed through those animals to secure the promise for Abram, and to assure him that God will remain faithful to God's promises... even unto death.

God claimed us as God's own, and laid foundations of love and trust... faithfulness and provision.

And from the very beginning... God showed us what God was willing to do for us, to nurture and build this mutual relationship...

Humans are the ones who falter and fall away... humans have not always held up our end of the agreement... but not God... God remains true.

And so... roughly two thousand years after cutting that covenant with Abram... Jesus... who is God... knew where his mission would take him... he knew Herod was against him...

Maybe the Pharisees were genuine in their attempt to warn him... or...

maybe they were taunting him... hoping he would abandon his disciples and his mission, and run and hide...

...maybe they were calling him a chicken.

So, Jesus, in turn... calls Herod a fox. That's not a compliment.

The fox is the notorious enemy of the chicken – and not just because he's a predator.

My friend who taught me about chickens, also taught me about foxes... A fox doesn't just kill when he's hungry.

A fox will savage an entire hen house, killing indiscriminately and leaving the bodies behind.

In calling Herod a fox, Jesus names Herod as a danger to everyone, including the Pharisees before him.

But a hen... a Mother hen, when faced with a threat to her babies... never leaves her post.

He tells the Pharisees that he's casting out demons and healing the sick... nothing will deter him from his mission.

Jesus is resolute ...*even* knowing that the path leads *through* death, he does not waver... because he also knows... that on the third day... the work will be complete.

On the third day...sin and death will be defeated... and Love and mercy will prevail.

We may still falter in our faithfulness to God... but God does not. God remains faithful and true to us, and through Jesus' death and resurrection, God has redeemed us... once and for all.

Through Jesus' death and resurrection... we are saved... because Jesus gave his life to protect us...

God in Jesus... is a fierce Mother. ...and yet, tender and merciful, and full of love... longing to gather us under her wing... even though some are unwilling.

God in Jesus is not an abstract idea of a god who controls the world through puppet strings, or teases us around like playthings...

Jesus... is God who is near... a living, breathing, loving light in our lives who is worthy of our trust and love... worthy of our devotion...

the kind of devotion that changes how you live in this world...

...the kind of devotion that bends your heart toward those who are cast out and vulnerable... because they are among the first ones Jesus gathers to himself.

Jesus is God... a mothering God, spreading her great wings over us, sheltering all of Creation in her feathers, protecting us... and ultimately giving her life... to save us.

God has redeemed us... redeemed you... and me... God has given us grace and mercy...

God has fulfilled the covenant made with Abram and Sarai... once and for all... and secured our place, for all time... as God's beloved children...

And we, who are beloved children ...we can trust in the fierce determination of our God to protect us from our sin...

...and trust in the shelter of our Lord, always.

Amen