
My Sermon from Sunday March 13, 2022, 'Second Sunday In Lent' ~ "Jesus' Lament"

*O Lord, through the written word and through the spoken word
may we know your living word our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Our gospel is a lament for Jerusalem given by Jesus, and there are many parts of it that apply to the war in Ukraine. Today at 11 am parishioner **Jim Stewart** will be pealing our bells in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. Other churches around Thunder Bay will be doing the same.

It will be a peal of lament, a peal of sorrow, a peal of prayer and a peal of support for the people of Ukraine. A 'lament' is an expression of grief and sorrow and in our gospel passage for today from Luke 13:31-35, Jesus is pouring out his lament over Jerusalem. This is before he even arrives in Jerusalem.

Some Pharisees have come up to speak with Jesus and warn him to go away as Herod (in the words of the gospel) *"wishes to kill him."* Now I must tell you that this comment from the Pharisees makes me very uncomfortable and, yes, judgemental about their motives. The Pharisees were a Jewish religious group who kept Jewish laws and pursued purity. The New Testament, in general, portrays the Pharisees as opponents of Jesus. And my initial reaction when reading about their warning to Jesus that Herod wished to kill him was that they weren't being truthful or that they wished to frighten Jesus unnecessarily.

Perhaps, however, they were truly concerned about Jesus and this warning was done in care and with compassion. We need to remember that Nicodemus, who came to speak with Jesus at night, was a Pharisee, and so was Joseph of Arimathea who gave up his new tomb for the use of the body of Christ. Even the apostle Paul was a Pharisee.

I need to remember that there were many good and holy Pharisees and I need to take the warning of the Pharisees seriously and without any judgement whatsoever.

Jesus replies back to them with a strong and provocative response. *"Go tell that fox,"* (meaning Herod) . . . Jesus' metaphor for Herod as a fox is not meant to be flattering but to portray Herod as conniving, and untrustworthy ~ unfortunately all true . . . *"Go tell that fox for me that I am casting out demons and performing cures."* from Luke 13:32.

In other words, nothing is going to stop Jesus from doing his ministry, nothing is going to stop Jesus from healing, from miracles, from exorcisms.

Jesus goes on to lament about Jerusalem:

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it."

Jerusalem was the seat of power and prophets never hesitated in telling the truth and carrying the word of God to people.

We can empathize with Jesus' sorrow about the spiritual state of Jerusalem, just as we can lament over what is going on in Ukraine:

*"Kyiv, Kyiv, the city that is surrounded by invading Russian troops and desperately trying to hold on.
Kyiv, Kyiv, surrounded by howitzers that are ready to be deployed."*

Jesus then gives us a message of comfort and of hope. He then compares himself to a bird. Now if you didn't know the reference and you had to pick a bird, what bird would you pick to describe Jesus? An eagle perhaps? Or a robin who announces spring? What about a lark who sings so sweetly? Or a wise owl? What about a loon, which is one of my favourite birds?

I don't think that this barnyard bird would be at the top of our list. I definitely know that it would not be at the top of mine. I would probably put the chicken together with a seagull! I would never compare God to a chicken. Yet this is actually what Jesus does. Jesus compares himself to a CHICKEN, to a *"hen who gathers her brood under her wings."* . . . *"How often have I desired to gather your children together."*

Every summer I watch the mother ducks on *One Island Lake* keep a watchful eye out for their babies as they teach them to swim and survive on the lake. The mother duck truly gathers her brood together and keeps them close, especially when Wally spots them and decides to jump off the dock into the lake and to swim as close as he can to the little duck family.

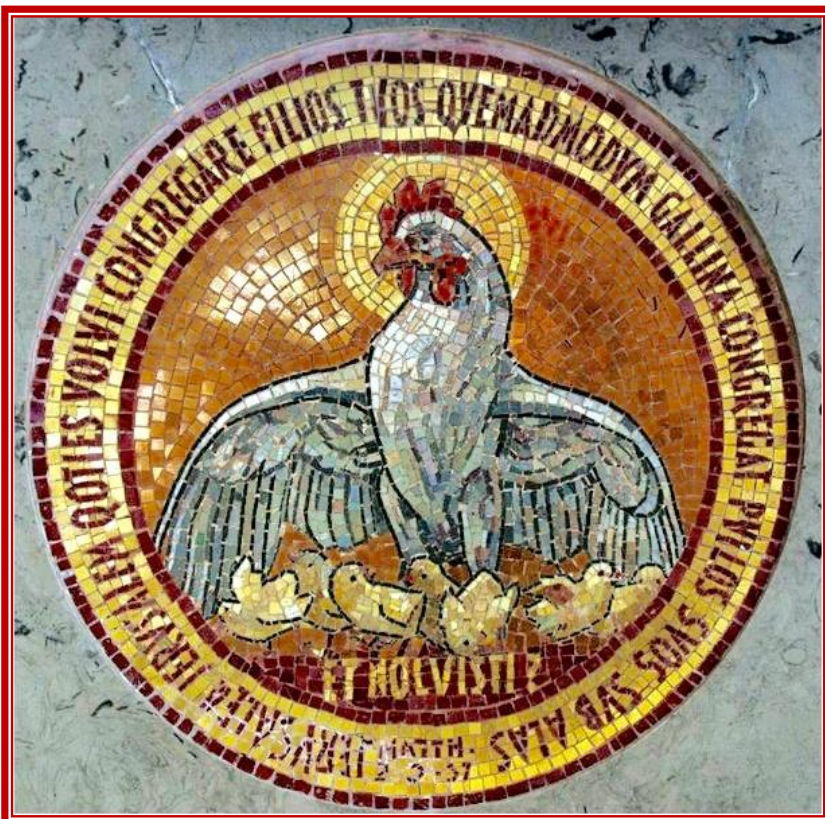
We are not used to the metaphor of God as a hen, are we? We are more familiar with the images of God as the Good Shepherd, the Potter, Jesus as the Bread Of Life, as Light, as the 'Alpha and Omega.'

In truth, the hen is such a wonderful image of the love and care of Jesus.

There is a mosaic of the hen with her chicks in the church of *Dominus Flevit* ("God Weeps") on the side of the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem. I have walked past this little church in the shape of a teardrop to symbolize Jesus' grief as he laments but I have never gone inside.



Here is what it looks like (above). And here is the mosaic (left.)



This mosaic is from the 7th century and shows a strong and defiant hen widely spreading her wings to gather her chicks.

The words in Latin around the hen and chicks are directly from the gospel: *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings."*

We feel Jesus' heart breaking as he sorrows over Jerusalem and laments with these words:

"You were not willing." Luke 13:34

You were not willing to listen to my words. You were not willing to turn to me, to believe in me, to let me gather you safely under my wings.



This is your Bible verse for today:

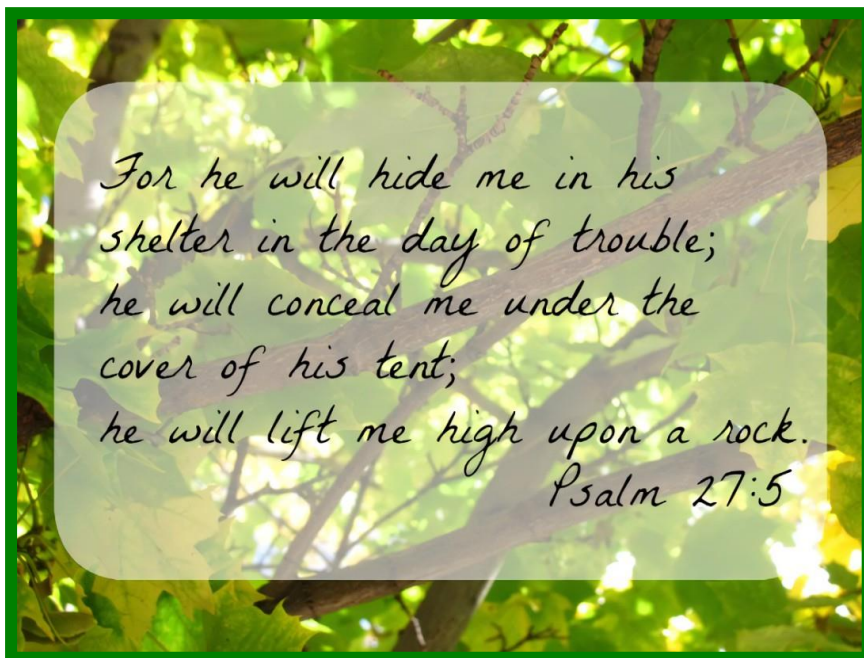
“YOU WERE NOT WILLING.”

Luke 13:34

Jesus continues to wish to gather us together and to bless us as we shelter under God’s wings. He laments: *“How often have I desired to gather the children of Jerusalem together?”*

Today we cry out to God. Not the phrase, “Lord, I am not willing.” But the

phrase, “Yes, Lord, I am willing. Yes, Lord, many people of the world are working together to bring peace to Ukraine. Yes, Lord, I am willing to believe in you and to be your disciple.”



The psalmist says,

*“Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.
For the Lord will hide me in his shelter
in the day of trouble,
My head is lifted up above my enemies
all around me,
I will sing and make melody to the Lord.”*

(from Psalm 27)

May these words be our cry to action as we peal bells, and raise money for Ukraine, as we walk together in solidarity, and in the love of Christ.

And as we *“sing and wait for the Lord, we are strong and our hearts take courage.”* (again from Psalm 27).

“Yes, Lord, I am willing.” Amen.

Amen.

Archdeacon Deborah+

