

Sermon Notes: March 13, 2022

[Lectionary Readings](#)

Focus: Chickens and Desire

Luke 13:34 *How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings*

Jesus likening himself to a hen should be a soft and cuddly metaphor. But two breaths earlier Jesus calls Herod a deceptive fox and Jerusalem a prophet killer. I contend that the hen metaphor describes a fierce protector instead of a Charmin cuddler.

I will talk about similar metaphors on this page. On page 2, I will dig into a Greek word for “desire” that shows up three times in the gospel. Desire can lead to hens protecting their young, and desire can lead to murdering Herods. I hope this exploration will help us make more sense not only of the gospel, but also our current moment as well.

Chickens and Bear and Turkeys, oh my. Some of my favorite feminine images of God are the protective mamas. The prophet Hosea describes Yahweh as an angry mama bear protecting Israel from its enemies, even if those enemies are sometimes itself. *Hosea 13:8 Like a bear robbed of her cubs, I will attack them and rip them open.* These fierce females are far from a plushy toy; they embody a spiritual value of not tolerating the oppression of the weak.

Mama Turkeys are probably not something you would have as a mascot for a sports franchise. I was hiking Las Trampas to Mt. Diablo recently. This hike changed my mind about turkeys. I was blissfully tromping along when a skinny necked turkey popped out the brush. “Aw, so cute,” I thought. But she jumped out and headed straight for me stabbing her neck at me to get me off the trail. I backed up 5 yards until she stopped; she returned to her spot; and then took her chicks straight down the ridge.

I can’t help but think about Ukraine and the fierce mama spirit that has consumed her citizens. The fighting image of Ukraine might well be that of a Mama Turkey clearing a path for her homeland.

There is a viral video of a Ukrainian grandma confronting Russian soldiers. She keeps insisting they take a handful of sunflowers from her hand and put them in their pocket. When they die, she says sunflowers will bloom as a symbol of Ukraine’s peace. Here is that [Grandma video \(a couple of spicy words in translation\)](#). By the way, sunflowers—soniashnyk—have been a long-standing symbol of peace in Ukraine. Sunflowers have been worn by world leaders as symbol of support for Ukraine recently.

I have fancied myself a pacifist. My live-and-let-live neutrality was confirmed when we invaded Iraq under the fabricated story of WMDs. I would see Iraqi moms online cursing American soldiers. Later, I wondered why the only winners were KBR and other military contractors. I celebrate the bravery of American veterans while at the same time weep over the fallout our soldiers experience from PTSD, [burn-pit-sickness](#), and life-long physical injuries.

The neutrality I thought I cherished began to crumble years ago as one ISIS video after another began to dominate western news. I could not tolerate a “both sides” argument

with ISIS. My neutrality is further eroded now. I can't help but cheer chemistry students turning Ukrainian labs into Molotov cocktail factories. Is it all logical? Of course not. But logic and neutrality only really work when you are in control of the outcome. Neutrality in Ukraine *rewards* Russia. Russia "desires" Ukraine. I want to put that word desire into the Gospel context for today – Luke 13.

Desire Herod desires (thelō) to kill Jesus. Jesus has his own desire to gather the chicks. And Jerusalem desires the blood of the prophets.

Herod's desire / *thelō*

Luke 13:31 *Herod wants to kill you.*

Herod has no problem executing John the Baptist. He desires power, no matter how many heads roll. Jesus knows this fox's only real move for power is aggression and murder, but this desire is ultimately hollow. Jews and Greeks love to tell stories of foxes as sinister creatures, and we do too. You know... little red riding hood? But even foxy power won't stop Jesus from casting out demons and embracing people in the gospel. Abusive power can't stop us either.

Jesus' desire / Jesus' *thelō*

Luke 13:34 (Jesus speaking about Jerusalem)

How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen...

Jesus could have described himself as a majestic nesting eagle: Deuteronomy 32.11 "like an eagle that stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young." But this feathery Jesus desires (thelō) to provide shelter under her less than majestic chicken wings.

*Jeremy Williams from working preacher [writes](#) about Jesus' *thelō**

Jesus' priority does not seem to be his own safety. He instead is primarily concerned about following the divine purpose (dei) that does not direct him away from danger. It leads him directly into it and ultimately through it.

Jerusalem – negative desire / the city's *thelō*.

Luke 13:34 *you (Jerusalem) were not willing* (not desirous to gather the chicks)

Jeremy continues: Jerusalem does not desire (thelō) what Jesus desires... In the case of Jerusalem, rather than desiring the prophet's message, they opt to stone those sent by God... They are the ones who convict innocent people and prioritize political correctness over providing cures. Hence, their desires are empty.

...Jerusalem leadership would not have had the power to execute lethal sentences. Only the Romans wielded that power. Thus, Jerusalem reflects local leaders under the auspices of the empire who conspire to eradicate a voice that critiqued their power and challenged their authority. Jesus' critique is again those who criminalize truth-tellers.

I am praying to Mama Jesus to protect her children, create barriers against oppression, and help us practice peace everywhere.

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