

Luke: The Fox and the Hen

Sermon 3-17-2019

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Luke 13:31-35

³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” ³²He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Message:

When I was a camp counselor at Camp Hebron some years ago, I was young in ministry. Yes, believe it or not, I started ministry as early as 2004. So I’ve been in ministry of some sort for almost 15 years. Being young in ministry, I wanted some experiences that I didn’t have yet. One was, I had never led someone to Christ. I never had guided someone through the sinner’s prayer. So my prayer during the summer of 2005 was that the Lord would allow me the privilege of leading someone to Him. Well...my first week was working with mentally handicap adults. It was a joy to work with them, but it was hard. One of my adult campers had pooped his pants while taking a nap. So I literally had to hose him down in the shower and wash his dirty underwear. It wasn’t quite what I pictured for leading someone to Christ. Although, I’ll have poop diapers in the near future. The next week I was a counselor over what they called “Ruff-a-week.” This would be similar to “Mountainside” at Camp Swatara. This Ruff-a-week was for high school teenagers. I thought it was going to be a blast. I had good campers, but I still didn’t get the opportunity to lead them to Christ. In fact, that week, I had no poop pants, but I got sun poisoning. I was hoping for a particular camp for the third week, but I got stuck with a camp I didn’t want at all: Horse Camp. I had one 10-year-old boy camper that I got to hang-out with all week. No offense to him, but his personality was a dud. It was challenging to hold a conversation with him and he was my only camper that week I had to look after. Boys didn’t typically go to Horse Camp. By my fourth week I had hit my max. I

kept praying for God to give me the opportunity to lead a camper to Christ, but I was served poop pants, sun poisoning and the most boring camper. Midway in my fourth week, I hit my breaking point in our mid-week counselor exclusive worship. No campers were there. I can probably count on one hand the amount of times that I've cried in my adult life. I don't avoid crying out of pride. Even when I want to cry I can't. It's just the way I'm wired. But this moment broke me for sure. This isn't what I had in mind when I prayed that prayer, when I had that hope of bringing a camper to Christ. I wailed, I cried and I cried out to God. I was ready to run away from it all.

With all that Jesus endured, it's hard for me to imagine why He never walked away. ³¹At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.'" It's unclear here the Pharisees motives. Typically, the Pharisees are out to get Jesus. To thwart his efforts. But, here, there is no indication that that is the Pharisees intentions. So they could genuinely be trying to warn Jesus. Or this could be a sly way of knocking Jesus off course, so to speak. It's interesting how Jesus responds, ³²He said to them, 'Go and tell that fox for me, "Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.'" In other words, Jesus is saying, "I'm going to do what I'm called to do. The threat of death is not going to knock me off course. Besides, prophets aren't killed outside Jerusalem." There are number of backhanded slights by Jesus. One, He calls Herod a "fox." Implying that Herod is sly or cunning. Herod is trying to deceive us all with this threat. The other backhanded slight is naming that a prophet can't be killed outside Jerusalem. He's saying that the only way He's going to die is in Jerusalem like all the other prophets who were killed in Jerusalem. He expands upon it in 34a, ³⁴Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!" According to the law in Deut. 13:10, false prophets are to be stoned. This is a nod towards past prophets and a nod towards the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7. So this fox, Herod, and his minions are most likely trying to knock Jesus off-course in this instance.

It's interesting where Jesus takes this next, "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" In other words, Jesus wants to bring these people under his wings, like a hen would with her chicks, but they have refused. What can Jesus do for the people when they have refused His protection? His only option is to face-off with the Fox and all the principalities and powers to which the Fox is associated with. That is the only way Jesus can protect God's children. So he says, ³⁵See, your house is left to you." In other words, "Keep your house! Keep

your riches! Keep your temple! Keep your perceived power! But don't fool yourself into thinking these things are the Kingdom of God!" And then here's the irony of this passage, "And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'" When do the people say these words? When Jesus is entering Jerusalem. The Pharisees are trying to scare Jesus away with a death threat and yet Jerusalem is the very place he will go to die. Death does not hold our Jesus back. Death does not scare our Jesus away.

What I found most interesting about our passage was this imagery of fox and hen. When Jesus receives this death threat from Herod, many of us may be scared. But, to Jesus, this must mean that He is doing something right. If Jesus is worthy of a death threat from Herod, it means that He is stirring-the-pot to the point of boiling and will upset Herod's authority in the land. I had not seen it this way when I was in the midst of poopy pants, sun poisoning and the boring camper, but I must have been doing something right to pray for campers to come to Christ. So much so that I was worthy to be persecuted in this way. Now, naming it as "persecution," may be overstating it, but at the time, my suffering was a big deal to me. To be frank with you, I've gone back and forth in believing in spiritual warfare. Mainly because I've seen spiritual warfare talk be abused and misused. Like every time we sin saying, "The devil made me do it." Or every time we suffer, "Satan is attacking me." I don't think every time we sin or every time we suffer it has to do with a spiritual attack. But I will say this, the more you dig into the Word, the more you pray, the more you worship, the more you will face spiritual attack. I don't say that lightly. I know that as we're engaging in our 40 Days of prayer, those are not comforting words. But I can testify to this experience. In seasons like the one we're currently in with a concentrated time in prayer and study, I've experienced spiritual attack. In another season of an intense prayer life the other year I was having a strange experience. Every time that I would spend deep prayer time with the Lord, I came away feeling exhausted. I was depleted. I thought, "This is strange. I thought by spending more time with the Lord, I would come away feeling refreshed and rejuvenated." So I mentioned it in a conversation with Jay McCumber, a Netzer leader, and he immediately said it was spiritual warfare. And guess what, he was right. As soon as I started declaring the name of Jesus in the sanctuary and praying prayers that would cast evil away from myself and this sanctuary, I started to feel different in my prayer time. Another example comes from Galen, the preacher from last week. Galen had a car that kept giving him trouble. It wasn't that old and it kept having car issues with big bills attached to it. One day, he thought "Why not? It doesn't hurt to pray over the car." He did the same thing as me, prayed in the name of Jesus and casted evil away in the name of Jesus. He didn't have car issues for a long

time after that. My last example happened more recently. This prayer guide that you received last Sunday, I started praying it a few weeks ago just to see how it went and how it changed me and my relationship with the Lord. The more fervently I prayed, the heavier my spirit felt. In fact, in the midst of preparing for a baby and a new home, I sensed something unexpected was coming down the pike. Lo and behold, it was Kathy's resignation. The heaviness in my spirit was this temptation to believe that everything was coming crashing down. Kathy and Jim are leaving, what are we going to do? What is the future of Providence Church? Am I going to lose my job? How could God do this to me? As I spent more time in prayer, I came to the conclusion that I must be doing something right. For the devil to send this heavy spirit upon me and to even tempt me to think that things are coming down must mean that we are doing something right. And so immediately, I started to pray in the name of Jesus against these lies of Satan and against the temptations. And guess what, peace immediately filled my heart. Honestly, we're still figuring out our worship situation after Kathy, but I was reminded that day that our God is faithful.

Here's what the Lord wants us to hear today, how often have you denied the protection of mother hen? The protection of Jesus? We pray these prayers and we spend more time in the Word, but we ignore His protection. I hate to tell you that as you increase your prayer life and study of His Word, you will experience greater spiritual attack. If you read through the book of Acts though, the apostles and all who came to Christ counted their suffering as a joy. Peter gets flogged after proclaiming Christ in the temple and he rejoices. Stephen gets stoned and he rejoices in the midst of dying. Why? Because it means that they are worthy of the same punishment as Jesus. Paul talks about it constantly, we don't just claim the life of Christ, but we also have to be willing to suffer as Christ suffered. To die as Christ died and then we will experience the resurrection life. This is not to say to seek suffering, but that when you suffer for the name of Jesus to count it as a joy. Some of us have fallen into this belief that if we believe in Jesus that it means good things will happen to us and that we will experience blessing, financial or otherwise. Jesus promises no such thing. As you probably well know, there are those who seem to believe in Jesus and come away relatively unscathed. And there are those who believe in Jesus and experience suffering after suffering. Is one more faithful than the other? It's not for me to say. But if you think an increased prayer life will bring more blessing, it may not. But where I can give you hope is that our God is faithful. Even in the midst of suffering, God is faithful. God will care for you and love you if you receive his help and protection. Jesus says as much in a similar passage in John 10:25-30, "²⁵Jesus answered, 'I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; ²⁶but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. ²⁷My sheep

hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹What my Father has given me is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. ³⁰The Father and I are one." Jesus will care for His sheep. Also in 1 Corinthians 10:13, "No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it." You may suffer and experience "testing," but it will not be beyond the strength that God has given you. And lastly in 2 Thessalonians 3:3, "But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one."

So, when you are faced with suffering or adversity, how will you react? Will you try to fix-it-yourself? Will you run-away? Will you seek the mother hen's, Jesus', protection? After I broke down that Wednesday night at Camp Hebron, I was encouraged to read the book of Job. It gave me great comfort to read of his suffering and his enduring faithfulness to God. I prayed for the Lord's protection and I continued to pray for the Lord to allow me the privilege of leading campers to Him. The next night, the Lord prompted me to lead 3 children to Christ. Later in the summer, I had a horse camp again. And it happened to be counseling that same "boring" camper. This had to be God's sense of humor at work. That week, he came to Christ. And I have to tell you, for all the suffering that I endured in those few weeks as a Camp Counselor, it was totally worth it to see these children come to Christ and to witness their lives changed forever. Jesus wants to protect you. Jesus wants to watch over you. But if we distance ourselves from Him to avoid suffering, we distance ourselves from His care and His mighty works. So as you increase your prayer life in these 40 days of prayer, please don't be hindered by the suffering you may endure. God will give you the strength. God will guide you. God will be faithful to you. It will be worth it. And I guarantee you, you will be amazed by the almighty power of our God. You will be amazed by the abundance of His grace and the movement of His Spirit. Stay faithful Providence. Jesus will care for His sheep. Keep praying and God will bring signs, wonders and miracles in our midst. Amen.