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March 17, 2019

Our images of God are shaped by what is precious and valuable to us. What God looks like to us is deeply rooted in how we view our own selves, how we view the world around us and how we view relationships.

Most of our images that we have of God come from the bible and Jesus refers to himself in this way. *How often have I desired to gather your children together as a **hen gathers her brood under her wings***

As a hen.

When we think of Jesus and his personality we typically imagine this non-confrontational, loving, gentle, healer, teacher, miracle worker. So for Jesus to choose a mother hen is tell us something very significant about who Jesus is...that Jesus is ready to defend us from the foxes of the world. Defend God's children to his own demise.

Because a mother hen is protective, see once she lays her eggs her priority shifts from personal survival to ensuring the survival of her young. She will provide an education to her chicks, she will teach them to regulate their behaviors, she will gather and herd her chicks under her to protect them against pecking and aggression from predators. A mother Hen does not back down if a threat is nearby...

And like a hen, Jesus does not back down either. The Pharisees come to warn him about Herod and his response is calm and commanding.

"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.'"

He calls Herod a fox. And to be called a fox is not a compliment.

In the Jewish context of Jesus' day, the fox is associated with treachery and destruction. And some scholars have suggested that Jesus is mocking Herod.

Herod calls himself a "lion;" Jesus cuts him down to size. Calling him "a fox" well he might as well have called him a small fry that isn't worth his worry.

See, Jesus has bigger fish to fry. Jesus has work to do and ain't no Herod gonna stop him from doing it. He's got to keep loving people and pulling them under his wings...and he's going to keep doing this despite the threats to his own life, despite knowing full well where his future lies on the cross.

With arms wide open Jesus is like a mother hen - he is there to shelter us from the foxes of the world.

And while being called a fox was an insult - a fox is still a threat...especially a threat to chickens.

While Herod and his supporters want to lead the people into a new world with Rome at its center, Jesus calls the people to repentance and faith.

Luke's gospel, in particular, sets up Herod as a prime enemy of Jesus -- the one who plots Jesus' execution on the cross.

But as we know Jesus is victorious over all our enemies. Like a mother hen, Jesus gathers us together and protects us from the plots of the Evil One.

Jesus even longs to gather and protect us from the onslaughts of the world – the temptations that try to draw us away from our faith... that tries to draw us away from God... that tries to draw us away from the beloved community.

For we have many foxes in our modern world. The Foxes of the world lure us and tear us away from the protective arms of the mother.

And so we find ourselves repenting of the evil in the world. Repenting the foxes.

Foxes hunt at night, and sleep during the day. But when a fox feels safe and comfortable it will attack during the daytime.

And the foxes in the 21st century strike during the daylight. For evil doesn't just lurk in the dark...

And so as Christians we renounce the evil that dwells in the world.

On Friday afternoon a man filled with hate walked into two Mosques in New Zealand and opened fired on the people praying. In broad daylight a white supremacist decided he had the right to take lives from men, women, and children. He did not have that right.

This terrorist was no lion, but a fox. A fox that believes that he is better than other people. A fox that is a white supremacist and Islamophobic to the point where he actually believed what he was doing was ok.

And as Followers of Christ we live in vain if we do not vehemently renounce the systematic racism that perpetuates this type of thought, word and deed.

And so my brothers and sisters...

Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God?

Do you renounce Islamophobia and the slaughtering of innocents?

Do you renounce racism that perpetuates the idea of supremacy over others?

Do you renounce the Herods and foxes of this world that produce systems to oppress children of God?

Jesus weeps when the Herods and the Foxes tear us away from him.

Jesus weeps when we say who can and can not be loved by God.

Jesus weeps when he calls us close, but we aren't willing to let others be under his wings with us.

Jesus continually has his mothering arms wide open to protect us, to be with us, under the cross.

He sticks to what love compels him to do. Pursues us, time and time again with a passion.

We are like chicks because of how we wander and come and go. If you've ever watched a gaggle of chicks they run and bump into each other, fall down and get back up, they come and go to their mother but also stray far away.

When we look at our own faith lives I think we can relate to the chicks. The coming and going of our relationship with God, the falling down and getting back up - back into the loving arms of God, the running and bumping into the trials and tribulations of this world. Sometimes causing us to stray far away from God.

And yet, God's great love for us is persistent. Is calling us under the arms of God's protection, sheltering us under Gods wings and empowers us with the Holy Spirit.

God's love was made flesh to walk amongst us, live with us, die for us. All to gather us with wings wide open as the arms of the cross.

And so, may you be aware of the foxes in our midst.

May you have the courage to renounce them and the ways they hide and lurk in our lives.

And when you stray, know that Gods arms are waiting outstretched and calling you home under the safety of the wings of the cross.

Amen.