

13-19 March 2022 Luke 13: 31-35

Today, tomorrow and the next day

Read the passage from Luke. It is written below.

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, 'Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.' He 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. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed away from Jerusalem." Jerusalem, 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! See, 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."'

Bible notes

At that very hour' (v.31) is at the time when Jesus is teaching that entrance to the kingdom of God will be on a different basis from what many expect: to have shared a dinner table with Jesus and hear him teach will not be enough to claim him as an acquaintance. Meanwhile, strangers from the four points of the compass will be welcomed in. The way in is through the narrow door and we should strive to enter through it. By beginning this narrative 'At that very hour', Luke is linking this teaching about the kingdom of God with the suffering of Jesus that is foreshadowed here. 'Today, tomorrow, and the next day' (v.33) speaks of Christ's faithful service despite the risks, and the use of the specific phrase 'on the third day' (v.32) immediately makes a link to his death and resurrection. He knows (as perhaps any astute commentator of the time could guess, cf. John 11.16) that his journey to Jerusalem will be a journey to his death, but he does not speak about it in terms of his own courage, nor as a scornfully fierce martyrdom to expose the corruption of Jerusalem. He would far rather gather the people to him to protect them, but they are not (and will not be) willing. While Herod is a fox, wily and dangerous, Jesus describes himself as a hen. A rallying slogan such as 'I am lion, hear me roar' is always popular. How many of us would rally to 'I am hen, see me gather'?

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

In folktales, animals are often assigned human characteristics. Foxes are seen as cunning and predatory, whereas a chicken is usually stupid and cowardly. In this week's Gospel reading, Herod is called a fox, but Jesus likens himself to a mother hen. So how apt are these descriptions? Do Herod and Jesus fit the stereotypes? Herod may be somewhat 'foxy', but Jesus is certainly no chicken in the modern conventional sense! And in real life the mother hen is protective, brave and caring. Do we behave like foxes, or hens, or some other animal? And, if so, how would you characterise that animal?

Questions for reflection

You could also use the image and following questions to help introduce the theme.



Questions

- How would you describe the words on this wall?
- What words would be written on your wall?
- Pick one of your words – how might that value affect your behaviour?

Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

A prayer of thanksgiving

We praise you, loving God,
that you give each of us enough time
to do all that we are called to do.

Take from us the worry of hurry,
and enable us to delight in your presence with us,
and to share our joy with all who are in need
of hope and friendship and courage.

In Jesus' name we pray – thankfully and hopefully.

Amen.

A prayer to end the Bible study

Teach me, Lord God, to live out my faith;
to show courage when things are tough,
to show love to those in need,
and to be forgiving even when I am hurt.
Help me to follow Jesus.

Amen.