

The Rev. Nina Bacas  
 Year C Lent 2 March 13, 2022  
 Grace Episcopal Church, Alexandria Virginia  
 Gospel of Luke 13:31-35

I wonder how our Gospel is sitting with you this morning. Jesus ran a rapid gamut of emotions from anger, to sarcasm, and finally disappointment and sadness. As you heard it, how did your body feel? How does it feel now? Is your jaw tense? Is there a lump in your throat? In me, I feel it right here. It's the tension that's triggered from a sense of time running out. A sense that it is too late to change course. The destiny is set for Jesus and for Jerusalem. Given what is happening in the world, this passage also makes me want to hold my breath. The imagery of foxes, hens and chicks feels too close right now.

In our Gospel, Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem when Pharisees tell him that Herod Antipas is out to get him. It sounds absurd since no one can get in the way of God's mission, yet Jesus doesn't laugh in their faces. Like Jesus, Antipas wanted to lead his people in Galilee to a new world. But it was a new world with Rome at the center and with values opposite of the true Kingdom of God. So, at the mention of Antipas's name, Jesus was flushed with anger and said, "Go tell that fox for me that he has no part in God's plan". Then he quickly pivoted to sarcasm about how poorly truth had always been received by the religious elite in Jerusalem. Next his mood turned to sadness. We hear his lament. He calls "Jerusalem, Jerusalem", but less out of judgment and more out of love. He calls Jerusalem to repentance. From that call we receive the image of God as a protective mother hen. But not all the chicks are under her wings.

I was recently on a call with some other preachers and we focused on this passage. It turned out that none of us knew a thing about chickens, not how to care for them nor any detail about chicken behavior. We wondered: does the hen go to the chicks or do the chicks go to the hen? It turned out that one of us did know. She piped up and said the hen raises her wings, clucks, and then the chicks run towards her. When all the chicks are at her side, the mother lowers her soft and sturdy wings to shelter and warm her many babies.

It's interesting that Jesus chose this image. In the Old Testament, God is referred to in birdlike ways. In the first chapter of Genesis, the Hebrew can be translated as "God brooded over the waters". Referring to early Israel as God's new fledgling, Deuteronomy chapter 32 reads, "As an eagle stirs up its nest, and hovers over its young; as it spreads its wings, takes them up, and bears them aloft on its pinions, the Lord alone guided him." But Jesus didn't choose an image of a mighty eagle for himself. Instead he chose a bird at the bottom of the food chain. A bird that nurtures and mothers. A bird whose image is never used as a symbol for any worldly nation. Yet it was through this image of a lowly mother hen that he showed that it was the Father's will to protect Jerusalem through him. Jesus was not only predicting Jerusalem's destruction but also its salvation.

From the Gospel of Jesus's outward journey in Luke comes the perfect question on our inward journey in Lent. What will become of us if we don't run to Jesus?

As in this Gospel passage, we are all faced with situations and people that seem hopeless. We see this in the news, in our daily lives and our personal relationships. Through our worldly eyes we perceive that there are too many things stacked against him, or her or them. How can they possibly find healing, or reconciliation, or any way to thrive in this world once again?

I have caught myself in this thought pattern, (and I know I'm not alone with this) and of course I was wrong. I needed to run to Jesus with my concerns. Instead, not only was I taking it upon myself to predict an outcome, I

allowed myself to question: where was God? Where was the hope? Instead of running to Jesus, I was alone and allowed my faith to be challenged.

I've learned that it's not our job to declare something or someone hopeless. Because of Jesus's work in this world, it is never too late. There is always hope, regardless of how we may be feeling, because Jesus is always calling. In this Gospel passage, we hear and feel the fluctuations of Jesus's strong human emotions. Because we know his, he knows ours. We are called to run to the one who knows us as a mother knows us. The one who knows the refreshment we need so that we can go into the world holding up what the world is so hungry for. We go into the world holding up hope. We hold up hope through what we say, what we do, and most importantly, how we pray. We do this with confidence knowing that our Lord and Savior gave his life for this. But Jesus does not call us alone. We answer Jesus's call together, so that in difficult times, we may become those sheltering soft sturdy wings for one another. (we can see this in our personal relationships and how countries treat each other) When we answer Jesus's call and run to him, this is what becomes of us.