

# Second Sunday in Lent

**“YOU DON’T SCARE ME,” SAID THE HEN TO THE FOX**

**Luke 13:31-35**

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**Analysis by Timothy Hoyer**

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.’”

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## **DIAGNOSIS: The Fox Threatens the Hen and Us**

**Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem)** : *Life Is Full of Threats*

A threat was made by Herod, “I want to kill Jesus.” No reason is given, but it might be that he thought Jesus to be John the Baptist, raised from the dead (Luke 9:7-9). Herod put John in prison because John rebuked Herod “because of Herodias, his

brother's wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done" (Luke 3:19-20). No one likes to be rebuked. To be told one is wrong is in itself a threat. The threat is that if you are wrong, then you can be dismissed, ignored, ridiculed, and not worth listening to. Thus a rebuke is a threat to take away the basis for how you make your life a good life. There is always that demand to make your life a good life. If you have made a mistake or done something wrong, what can you do to fix the damage to your life that is no longer good? You can deny it. You can make excuses. You can threaten to silence the accusation. But there is no way to fix the fact that your wrongdoing has made your life no longer good.

**Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) :** *We Depend on Threats to Get Things Done*

Even Herod the King was subject to the threat of "be a good king or else." "Or else" could be that his historic legacy would be lost. Or it could be that he would lose his place on the throne. Herod, like all people, lived a life that had threats in it. Threats are just the way life works. Threats are used to get people to do what you want. What is wanted may be the good order of society and the preservation and protection of life. A certain behavior is demanded. Such a demand will not necessarily motivate people to obey, so a threat is attached to the demand. The demand is to pay taxes; the threat is that government authority will take your money, plus a penalty fine, if you don't pay your taxes. "Actions have consequences." The way of using threats is not a way of life chosen by people. It is just there and people use it and depend on it. People don't like it when a threat happens to them. But everyone's life is a life where there are threats. God's people had prophets rebuke them with God's judgment. The best way to protect one's feeling of having a good life before God was to kill the prophet.

**Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) :** *Our House of*

### *Threats Is Left to Us*

We are all stuck where the status of our lives as good lives is always threatened. We can't get away from threats. Actually, we build our lives upon the use of threats, using them to get people to do what is needed. Threats can be the basis of a relationship with others. A relationship that uses threats cannot create love between people or between God and us. We do not listen to the hen, and are left with our house of threats (13:35; see also Exodus 20:5). We prefer to use threats, as if it is the only way to live. But deep down, unacknowledged by most, is that there is a threat that says that you have to live a good life or you die-and that's it.

## **PROGNOSIS: The Hen Outwits the Fox**

**Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal Solution)** : *The Threat of Death Is Taken Away by Jesus' Resurrection*

Jesus, when given Herod's threat, told the "fox" that he, Jesus, has something to do and he will get it done. Jesus compared himself to a hen who would gather her chicks. So the hen is telling the fox, "You can't stop me. Now shoosh, go away!" Jesus knows what he is going to do (9:21-22, 44). He is going to be handed over to sinners, killed, and then raised on the third day. That is why he has work today, tomorrow, and finishes his work on the third day. "Jesus' death is not the death of a tragic hero but the goal of a person who knows what he has to do" (Luke, Fred Danker, p. 45). The hen says to Death, "You can't stop me." The hen says to all threats about not having a good life, "You can't stop me." And they couldn't stop Jesus who, when people looked for him in his tomb, was not there: "He is not here, but has risen" (24:5). Threats, even threats that were carried out, could not stop Jesus, the Son of God.

**Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution)** : *Jesus Gathers Us under His Wings of Mercy*

In faith, we hear Jesus' longing call to Jerusalem as an invitation to find shelter in him: Jesus gathers us under his wings to shield us from threats-even God's threats of "the soul that sins shall die." Jesus shields us with forgiveness and mercy, the antidote that takes away the threats from our mistakes and wrongs, just like the antidote for demons is casting them out, and the antidote for sickness is performing cures (v. 32). Jesus gathers us under his wings and by that gathering into his death and rising makes our lives and us good. We are free from all threats that demand we make our lives good. Jesus will one day free us from the threat of death against us by taking us into his death and resurrection, that gathering under his wings. Jesus is doing his work today and tomorrow and will complete it on the final third day when we see him come and say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord."

**Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) :** *Life Is Full of Jesus' New Life*

We get to gather others under the wings of Jesus. We do acts of kindness that help restore lives-the casting-out-demons and performing-cures kind of kindness. Also, we do not use threats on those we want to gather under Jesus' wings; and we do not use threats on one another under Jesus' wings. He has freed us from using threats by offering us his Spirit as the way to get people to be kind, merciful, and to forgive. Forgiveness is the way to handle the mistakes and wrongs we do-and we will do them. Threats are a relationship with someone, but they do not allow for love. With the love Jesus gives us we use love as our relationship with one another. So we invite, we don't threaten. We offer, we don't threaten. When threatened, we can, from the safety of Jesus' wings (cross and rising), say, "We have work to do today, tomorrow, and the next day." When people feel troubled by threats, we offer them Jesus' forgiveness. To forgive is to die to the way of threats, to our wanting to administer an

appropriate consequence; it is to work with the person to restore what was broken, or recover what was forgotten, or love what irritated us. We have the hen backing us up.