

Second Sunday in Lent

FOX IN THE HENHOUSE!

Luke 13:31-35

Second Sunday of Lent

Analysis by Eric W. Evers

31 At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."32 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.33 Yet 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.'34 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! 35 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.' "

DIAGNOSIS: Fleeing the FoxZ

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem) – *Flee the Fox*

Maybe those Pharisees weren't so dumb after all! Herod was out to kill Jesus, and he had the clout to carry out his threats, it seemed. Well, we contemporary Christ-followers may not have the local authorities out for our blood (not in North America, at least; elsewhere, the situation may be tragically otherwise), we do face plenty of forces after our hides. And we do a great job following the Pharisees' advice and running away. Old age wants

to claim us, so we run to our sporty little cars (and perhaps little blue pills). Co-workers want to make snide jokes about “crazy Christians,” so we duck and cover. Our job may not look secure, so we scramble to the presidential candidate we think most likely to save our skin. Life’s anxieties loom over us, so we flee to the comfort of Jack Daniels or George Killian’s.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem) – *Fear the Fox*

So much of our behavior, in fact, could be defined as “flight.” How much of our behavior, when we’re honest, is driven by fear? The “foxes” of the world scare us. We believe that we can be undone, undone by scorn, by age, by failure, by guilt, by remorse, by terrorists, by politics. We feel so vulnerable, so at risk. And so we fear the foxes.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem) – *Foregoing the Faith*

But in our flight from the foxes, we become foxes ourselves. We run from the only One who can truly protect and secure us eternally, the One whose wings surround us like a mother hen’s. How can we run from such love, except through those surrounding wings, through them, piercing them? And pierce him we do, with the nails of our unbelief (for that is what fear of the foxes is: a lack of belief in God’s mother hen-like love). Thus, in fleeing the “Herods” chasing us, we become little Herods ourselves, opposed to the loving purposes of God. Running from the foxes, we become foxes ourselves, now cornered by both what we were fleeing and the wrath of God.

PROGNOSIS: Gathered by Grace

Step 4: Initial Prognosis (Eternal solution) – *Gathered by Grace*

Thanks be to God, we have a Lord who loves by having his hands pierced, a Savior whose compassion persists through our betrayals, a mother hen-like Master who triumphs over our rejection by extending a scarred hand and saying to cornered foxes, “Peace be with you.” In his death, Jesus bears our God-

forsaking and God-forsakenness, speaking mercy to those who “were not willing” to respond to his gathering love.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution) – *Given the Guts*

Well, maybe the Pharisees don’t have such a great idea, after all! Now, we see just how faithful our God is – faithful beyond our faithlessness. This Jesus is a God on whom we can rely. Even death, death at our own hands, cannot drive him from us, for, after all, on the third day he finishes his work, raised from the dead for us. And, finally, we have the guts to embrace his embrace of us.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution) – *Giving the Glory*

And so our anxiety can become transformed into doxology. We can stand fast against the Herods around us, fearing not the fox but glorying in our God. Grounded in his power, we no longer need let fear prevent us from serving, witnessing, risking, sacrificing on behalf of the neighbor; in fact, we will find ourselves quite compelled to do so! We may still quake a bit in our boots, but the mother hen’s wings surround us, and we are safe from the foxes.