

SERMON
 First Lutheran Church
 Aitkin, Minnesota

Luke 13:31-35
 Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen
 February 24, 2013

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

How many of you have **grandmas**? How many of you have **moms**? These are some of the people that God has given to love and care for us right? It is **hard work to have babies**, to raise kids – without grandmas and moms we wouldn't be here.

They **protect** us from bad people. They **teach** us to look both ways when crossing the street. They **feed** us. What's your favorite food that your grandma or mom makes? Moms and grandmas teach us how to **tie our shoes**. They teach us that we **should be eating vegetables** and fruit to stay healthy. They teach us how to **love and to do good things** in the world.

And moms and grandmas **tell us about God**. Dads and grandpas do this stuff too, but today we are focusing upon "**bold women**" in church. Some of the bold women of our church are helping to lead our worship service today. When I was getting ready for this Sunday, I would sometimes get mixed up and instead of saying that the **bold women** would be leading worship; I would say the "**wild women**" are leading worship. Oops!

We say "**bold**" women to describe women who **believe in God** and who have the **faith, courage and strength** to try to **do what God wants** them to do in their **lives, families, church and world**. We have lots of bold women in our church and in our lives. We have lots of women who make sure that God is **talked about at home**, that God is **listened to at school**, that God is **followed on the playground** and that God is **thanked for all that God does**.

Every person teaches something to everyone who sees them. We can teach **bad stuff** or we can teach **good stuff**. I love the women and men who are bold enough to teach the **best stuff** – **the stuff about Jesus**. I thank God for all of the bold women who are teaching you to **love and trust Jesus**. Maybe you want to **thank them** too. Maybe you want to give some bold women some **hugs** when you go back to your seats – moms, grandmas, Sunday school teachers, music teachers – **Thanks for being bold for God**. Maybe you will grow up to be bold for God too! Amen.

ADULT MESSAGE

The forest fire had quickly passed. As the ranger walked through the woods he looked down and saw a small bird on the ground, charred and dead. He touched it with the toe of his boot and the bird fell over. Out from under its blackened body ran little baby birds. Do you see it? That little bird literally gave up its life to keep its babies safe. I understand that chickens, hens, will do the same if fire threatens their little ones.

In our Gospel text for today, some Pharisees, very religious people, came and warned Jesus, "**Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.**" Jesus responded, "**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...'**" Herod was the puppet king that killed his own sons to protect his throne. He is the king who beheaded John the Baptist. Maybe Jesus was next. The Pharisees didn't care about Jesus' welfare. They just wanted him to stop what he was doing, go away and quit rocking their religious boat.

Do you see it? Jesus is faithfully carrying out God's saving plan for our world. Jesus is on a mission – help people with physical, emotional and spiritual problems for three days, then head for Jerusalem, the holy city where God's prophets often end up getting killed. Jesus goes on, "**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!**"

Herod threatened his life. Jesus knew that he was heading for his own death on a cross. The fox is threatening and Jesus goes on to use the picture of the mother hen protecting her little ones. Elsewhere in scripture God is seen as a mother bird sheltering her little ones in the nest. Jesus, as the mother hen, is facing Herod, the killer fox. The chicks aren't sure if they want the hen's protection. Are there still people living in our world who don't think they need God's protection? Do we sometimes try to face the fox alone?

Jesus is going to die for the chicks who are no match for Herod or for any of the world's other foxes. The hen is threatened by the fox but stands toe to toe with him while at the same time gathering the chicks beneath God's

wings. God has a plan for this world and for our lives and even death isn't going to stop it – Jesus' death or our death...

Do you know of some foxes out there? What about the **shooters** that grieve our nation? God is gathering, uniting and raising up millions of people to say, "**We must stop this senseless killing now.**" How will that happen? I don't know, but the hen is among us.

Foxes - one out of every seven among us battles the **demon of chemical dependency**. Yet a whole network, via Alcoholics Anonymous, treatment centers, local support groups and caring friends and family have risen up to fight for recovery and deliverance. Once a person has entered into recovery, they go on to help others to be set free. The hen is all over that!

Foxes - there are **emotionally abandoned children** right here in our own community. And this church, and our sister churches, and Kinship, and Scouts, and our school staff members – all are moving to share love, help and hope with every kid who needs it. There are many official and unofficial mentors moving to make a life-giving difference amongst our kids. The hen is loving and gathering kids right here among us.

Foxes - **one of our young families lost their home to a fire** this past week. They are surely still living in shock. How do you start over? Yet all kinds of family, friends, church members and community members have started to step up and provide needed, practical assistance. **Amy, Jason and their boys** are no doubt being carried by God and by God's people right now. The hen will save them from their fire.

Foxes – my **mom battled Alzheimer's disease** for at least the last eight years of her life. She lived in a nursing home in Carlton, Minnesota. It was run by seven churches who partnered together. It was the most wonderful, caring place. There were caring, sheltering hens all over that place. Nobody gets paid enough to work in such a place. They have to love people to day after day care for people who are on the long road home.

Jesus and God's people are going to keep on doing the loving, saving and life-giving work that God has planned for us and for our world. God works with us in the **face of crisis** and also in the **face of our human wants and needs, hopes and dreams.**

I was privileged to have been able to spend considerable time with my mom during the last few days that she was alive. She rallied a little just before the end and was able to be a little clearer and more responsive. On the next to the last day of Mom's life, my brother, my sister-in-law, my wife and I sat around her bed, talking to Mom, singing and praying. When I sang, "**Children of the Heavenly Father**," the old favorite Swedish hymn, Mom mouthed the words. When we sang, "**Jesus Loves Me**," she actually got a few, faint words out. When we prayed the **Lord's Prayer**, she prayed with us. On her last day, Mom was once again clear enough to respond with appropriate, though brief responses before lapsing into her gibberish. "**Mom, I love you with all of my heart.**" "**I love you syz, xab, twe...**" "**You are the best mom in all the world.**" "**Oh thank you syz, xab, twe...**"

Time was growing short, the nursing staff assured us. I leaned over her bed and spoke directly into her ear, "**Mom, do you remember that old picture in Alborn Church, the one with Jesus carrying the little lamb? Remember how you taught me that I was that little lamb, how we all are that little lamb? Mom, that same Jesus is carrying you right now and he is going to bring you home to be with God. There is a special place saved for you at God's heavenly, banqueting table. Dad and Grandma Johanna and Grandpa John are waiting to welcome you. All the people will see you coming and they'll be very glad. And there will be a wonderful meal with no more Alzheimer's, no more cancer and no more dying.**"

I stopped speaking. Mom's last words slipped out then, "**So beautiful.**" "So beautiful" – was Mom just responding to the words that I had said? Did she have a glimpse of Whom or what was coming for her in the next moments? Even advanced Alzheimer's didn't stop God from giving her life.

Mom long used a potato scoop and a coffee pot to serve, love and care for her many, many guests. That day, the woman, who so loved to serve, became God's heavenly guest. And what a meal they share...

Mom was the first bold woman in my life. Mom and Dad taught me about life and about Jesus. They taught me to trust God come hell or high water.

Bold women parade by my office window every day. As I sit working on my computer, I see folks coming and going from the entrance of the church.

Some of them step ever so cautiously so as to avoid a hip-breaking fall. Some are bent and tottering. Some are young and quick. All are walking with a heart beating for Jesus deeply inside of them. Foxes, Jesus – you can do as you please with your life. But I want to walk with the bold ones. I want to walk with Jesus – the mother hen who will shelter us to the death and beyond. Thanks be to God. And thanks bold women and men. Amen.

