

“Full to the Brim Under God’s Wing”
Luke 13:31-35

There are many tragic stories that came out of the horrific earthquakes in Turkey and Syria but we have also heard amazing stories of love and compassion. One such story came from the story of the cat and the firefighter in Turkey. Here is a video of the story: <https://youtu.be/45vxAsNIDvw>. It is such a heartwarming and beautiful story because in it we see the best of our human experience. (Here is the news story from ABC: A Turkish firefighter helped rescue a cat from the rubble of a collapsed building following a recent massive earthquake that rocked both Turkey and Syria and killed thousands of people, and the animal hasn't left his side since.

Video of the rescue has gone viral, which shows the firefighter wearing a bicycle helmet and goggles with the black and white cat on his shoulder. Eyewitness News learned the firefighter is named Ali Cakas, who is also a world-class mountain biker.

The 33-year-old is one of many Turkish firefighters still trying to find people and animals who are trapped underneath the rubble but are still alive.

The cat was reportedly trapped for 10 days and nights and has not left Cakas' side since the rescue. Cakas is also a coach for the Turkish national mountain bike team. Since the cat would not leave his side, Cakas took the animal home and has since adopted it. [According to social media](#), he's named it Enkas, which means "rubble" in Turkish. "Rubble" the cat has now become the mascot of Cakas' fire department.

Such stories remind us that deep within our hearts is the love that God has planted, and it is the same kind of love God has for us. We may forget it and live as if we are not loved, but it is always there ready to welcome and rescue us from the pit of fear, hate, and hurt.

What does it take for us to realize that we are so loved by God?

Jesus showed us through his life a robust kind of love that withstood the pressures of his time. In our Bible story for today, some leaders in the community came to Jesus and told him that if he does not run away, he was going to die. Jesus was in Jerusalem. Herod was known for being ruthless. He was also known for being an instrument of Roman power. Even though he was Jewish, he supported the Roman rule and was ruling under their power. He literally had the power to kill Jesus if he felt that Jesus was in any way a threat to the Roman rule in his region. How did Jesus respond? Or to put it another way, “How did love respond?” Let’s listen to Luke 13:31-35

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,^[c] “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 away from 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."

Jesus' response was so surprising because it meant that love was strong enough to stand in the face of evil to transform it. Here is a poem by Rev. Sarah Are about Jesus' response.

Come Rain or Shine

"I will keep on."

That's what I heard him say.

I will keep on
driving out demons
and healing people,
speaking the truth
and loving endlessly,
searching for the lost sheep
and crying for the brokenhearted,
feeding the hungry
and welcoming the outcast.

"I will keep on."

That's what he said, right
after he said my name, right
after he called me beloved, right
after he welcomed me home
and saved me a seat.

And I knew,
there was no stopping him.
I was under his wing.
Come rain or come shine,
today and tomorrow,
this love keeps on.

Jesus' response showed no fear. It showed only love, even when the threat to his life was so imminent! Jesus challenged Herod by calling him a fox. This was not a compliment. It is actually worse than what we think of foxes today. In the time of Jesus and in his culture, a fox was thought of as cowardly. I love that the name for Herod in the First Nations Version is "Looks Brave." That is exactly what Jesus meant. Herod thought of himself as a lion, but Jesus saw in Herod someone who was inept and worthless. Not only that, but in a few phrases, Jesus talked about an opposite image for his love for the people where he uses the image of a hen gathering her brood under her wings.

This image of a hen has captured the imagination of people over the centuries. In fact, there is a church in Jerusalem that is located on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, just across the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem, that according to tradition, is built where Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem. It is called Dominus Fleuit.

Inside the chapel, the altar is centered before a high arched window that looks out over the city. On the front of the altar is a mosaic medallion of a white hen with a golden halo around her head and her wings are spread wide to shelter her chicks that crowd around her feet. The hen looks ready to spit fire if anyone comes near her babies. The medallion is rimmed with red words in Latin. Translated into English they read, "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!"

I think that it is interesting that Jesus used these two opposite metaphors of the fox and the hen to deal with his struggle against the powers of Herod and the Roman Empire. In a sermon on this text, Barbara Brown Taylor questions Jesus' choice of a chicken as the opposite of the fox, "What about the mighty eagle of Exodus or Hosea's stealthy leopard? What about the proud lion of Judah, mowing down his enemies with a roar? Compared to any of those, a mother hen does not inspire much confidence. A hen is what Jesus chooses, which, if you think about it, is pretty typical of him. He is always turning things upside down so that children and peasants wind up on top while kings and scholars land on the bottom. He is always wrecking our expectations of how things should turn out by giving prizes to losers and paying the last first. So of course he chooses a chicken, which is about as far from a fox as you can get. Jesus won't be king of the jungle in this or any other story. What he will be is a mother hen, who stands between the chicks and those who mean to do them harm. She has no fangs, no claws, no rippling muscles. All she has is her willingness to shield her babies with her own body. If the fox wants them, he will have to kill her first."

What Jesus offered in the face of the oppressive powers of the world was his love and his ability to stand firmly in God's love even at the point of our greatest fears, the point of death. He was filled to the brim with God's love.

In the same way, we are called to do the same. We are called to live lives steeped in God's love. Some of us might say, but this was Jesus, I can't be expected to be like him. He had that God thing going, how could we live like that? Is it even possible?

I believe that it is not only possible for us to live this way of love and resistance, but it is also the only way we can ever find peace in our lives and in our world. Our basic instinct for survival is to run away from danger or if Herod is threatening us with some guns, we would go and get bigger guns to ward him off! But how would Jesus have been different from any of the other leaders who resisted the oppression of the Roman rule through violent resistance?

Jesus was not interested in organizing another armed resistance movement or another kingdom. He was interested in transforming the whole system. The only way for true transformation is through the strong love of God which seeks to transform evil through peaceful means. What is amazing to me about Jesus is his ability to see a different way despite the fact that it seems like everyone around him had a different vision. Most of the resistance movements of his day were violent or non-existent. The people knew that if

they spoke against the government that they would be dealt with harshly. Crucifixion was a common form of execution in those days. So, the only option for resistance that seemed viable were the violent ones. In fact, only 35 years after Jesus' crucifixion, the Roman Empire destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in the year 70 CE to get rid of the resistance movement.

Against this backdrop, we can see how radical Jesus' words to Herod were. They were words that carried the power and strength of someone who knew deeply in his own being the love of God and its transforming power. What is interesting in all of this of course, is the fact that as we look back on both Jesus and Herod, we see that Jesus' work and ministry had the most tremendous amount of impact on our world. Only a few people remember Herod and what he did in his life. While around the world, people continue to be inspired and transformed by the amazing gift of love which Jesus offered.

When we allow our hearts and lives to be captured by God's love by living under God's wing, we are seeking to transform the whole world through love! Here is a powerful video from Maya Angelou who was so captured by God's love. In this short clip from Ep. 416 of Oprah's "Super Soul Sunday" series, the late poet, Maya Angelou, gets emotional thinking about the vastness of God's love. In the video, she marvels: "It still humbles me, that this force—which made leaves and fleas and stars and rivers and you—loves me.")

<https://youtu.be/oBuEIEiJpsc>

I invite you to look at the image from artist Lisle Gwynn Garrity who was inspired by the scripture for today and by Psalm 27. She writes, "When I began this image, I drew a young boy peeking out from the open folds of a canvas tent in a refugee camp. I added rugged stones lining the bottom hem of the tent, holding the flimsy fabric in place. But then I felt compelled to turn the tent flap into a wing with feathers lined in gold. At that point, all the details of the boy's setting no longer mattered. I erased them from the scene. I saw clearly the promise of this psalm (Psalm 27): you are under God's wing. May you dwell there, surely and safely, all your days long."

Bring to mind yourself or someone (you know or someone you read about) who is in need of knowing that they are under God's wing. Let the words of the psalm be your prayer today (paraphrased by Nan Merrill):

Love is my light and my salvation,
whom shall I fear?

Love is the strength of
my life,

Of whom shall I be afraid?

~❤~

When fears assail me,
rising up to accuse me,

Each one in turn shall be seen
in Love's light.

Though a multitude of demons

rise up within me,
my heart shall not fear.
Though doubts and guilt do battle,
yet shall I remain confident.



One thing have I asked of Love,
that I shall ever seek:
That I might dwell in the
Heart of Love
all the days of my life,
To behold the Beauty of my Beloved,
and to know Love's plan.



For I shall hide in Love's heart
in the day of trouble,
As in a tent in the desert,
Away from the noise of my fears.
And I shall rise above
My struggles, my pain,
Shouting blessings of gratitude
In Love's Heart
And singing melodies of praise
to my beloved.



Hear, O my Beloved,
when I cry aloud,
be gracious and answer me!
You have said, "Seek my face."
My heart responds,
"Your face, my Beloved, do I seek;
hide not your face from me."



Do not turn from me,
You who have been my refuge.
Enfold me in your arms,
O Blessed One.
Though my father and mother
may not understand me,
You, my Beloved, know me and love me.



Teach me to be love,
as You are Love:
Lead me through each fear;
Hold my hand as I walk through
valleys of illusion each day,

That I might know your Peace.

~ ♥ ~

I believe that I shall know the
Realm of Heaven,
of Love here on Earth!

~ ♥ ~

Call upon the Beloved,
be strong and trust
in the heart's courage.
Trust in the power of Love;
The Beloved's unconditional and
everlasting love for you.

Amen.