

TEXT: Luke 13:31-35
THEME: Evil is dangerous and predatory
SUBJECT: Fear
TITLE: The Fox and The Hen

Second Sunday of Lent
17 March 2019
Messiah Moravian
Jerry Harris

Six-hundred years before Luke, Aesop gave us the fable of the Rooster and the Fox.

One bright evening as the sun was sinking on a glorious world a wise old Rooster flew into a tree to roost. Before he composed himself to rest, he flapped his wings three times and crowed loudly. Just as he was about to put his head under his wing, his beady eyes caught a flash of red and a glimpse of a long pointed nose, and there just below him stood Master Fox.

“Have you heard the wonderful news?” cried the Fox in a very joyful and excited manner.

“What news?” asked the Rooster very calmly. But he had a strange, fluttery feeling inside him, for, you know, he was very afraid of the Fox.

“Your family and mine and all other animals have agreed to forget their differences and live in peace and friendship from now on forever. Just think of it! I simply cannot wait to embrace you! Do come down, dear friend, and let us celebrate the joyful event.”

How grand!” said the Rooster. “I am certainly delighted by the news.” But he spoke in an absent way, and stretching up on tiptoes, seemed looking at something afar off.

“What is it you see?” asked the Fox a little anxiously.

“Why, it looks to me like a couple of Dogs coming this way. They must have heard the good news and . . .”

But the Fox did not wait to hear more. Off he started to run.

“Wait,” cried the Rooster. “Why do you run? The Dogs are friends of yours now!”

“Yes,” answered the Fox. “But they might not have heard the news. Besides, I have a very important errand that I had almost forgotten.”

The Rooster smiled as he buried his head in his feathers and went to sleep, for he had succeeded in outwitting a very crafty enemy.

Herod was a very craft enemy. The Pharisees, usually presented as Jesus’ adversaries, warn him that he is treading on dangerous ground where Herod is concerned. Jesus tells them to “Go tell that fox” I must finish my work.

Jesus faces two challenges to finishing his work. First, Herod wants to kill him. Why? Because doing justice, caring for those most in need, teaching the ways of God, threatens insecure rulers who govern by coercion, who depend on fear to maintain control over the people.

Strong men survive only as long as the police and military support them. Prophets know fear, fear for their lives as well as for the lives of the people they care about. The temptation to retire to the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and watch the sun rise and set is powerful.

The second challenge Jesus faces to completing his work comes from his own people. The residents of Jerusalem want nothing to do with him. In some respects the challenge of unrequited love is harder to deal with than the threat of violence.

We expect our enemies to be out to get us, but what mother expects her own children to reject her love and care and protection? It happens, we know, but it seems a greater offense than the resistance of an enemy.

Luke gives us Herod as the fox and Jesus as the mother hen (gender bending is nothing new to the Christian tradition). The fox represents evil as dangerous and predatory, nothing one can flirt with without risking one's life. The mother hen represents the love and care of God. Rejecting this love also entails risks: "Your house will be left to you."

This may be the most chilling line in the text. Literally it means your house will be abandoned or deserted. The work Jesus must complete is love's work. To reject the way of love is to embrace the way of violence. Only love can build a house, a home, fit for human habitation.

Jesus will not flee in the face of fear, nor will he allow the sadness of unrequited love to turn into resignation. He will do the work of building love's house until the forces of violence take his life.

If love's house is to be completed, we will have to face the same two challenges Jesus faced. If we deny the reality of evil, if we embrace the fox, we will be consumed, destroyed. If we allow unrequited love to turn into resignation, love's house will be abandoned, deserted.

Kathleen Belew, Assistant Professor of US History at the University of Chicago, author of *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America*, (Harvard, 2018) writes: "The idea of leaderless resistance - intended to prevent infiltration by government operatives and prosecutions - allowed white power to sort of disappear as a movement.

"White power violence has too often been described as the disconnected acts of lone wolves or madmen, and this is precisely because people - the public, prosecutors, jurors, the government - haven't understood it as a connected and coherent social movement. Relatedly, people often think of those involved in organized racist violence as uneducated, backward, or part of one class or regional identity. This is a misconception that really distorts the movement, which includes people from all class backgrounds, from all regions of the country, from cities and rural areas alike. It also includes rich people and poor people; high school drop outs and people with advanced degrees; religious leaders, along with felons; men, women and children."

David Lane wrote a slogan called "The Fourteen Words," which has become the rallying cry and code of the movement. The words - "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children" - have been used to justify violence.

What the murder of African American Christians at Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, the murder of Jews at Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, and the murder of Muslims at Al Noor and Linwood mosques in Christchurch NZ have in common is white power. This movement is organized similarly to ISIS and represents a great threat to our security.

If we are to build love's house, we need to wake up.