

People of God, overlooking the City of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives is a Church called Dominus Fleuit – which is translated as –The Lord Wept. This tear drop shaped Church was given its name from the passage in Luke 19:41, <sup>41</sup> *And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it,* <sup>42</sup> *saying, “Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.* <sup>43</sup> *For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side* <sup>44</sup> *and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation.”*

On the Altar in the Church of Dominus Fleuit is a Mosaic of a mother hen with her chicks taking refuge under her outstretched wings. If you would look at the front page of your bulletin, you will see an image of this mosaic. And around her is the Bible verse Matthew 23:38, *“How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing.”* This same passage is found in our Gospel reading today, in Luke 13:34.

The image of the mother hen with her chicks gathered under wings is representative of the love and mercy and compassion and protection that God’s people find in their God. There are many passages which represent this, but one of those passages is Psalm 36:7, which says – *“How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The Children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.”*

God stands ready to protect his children from the dangers of sin, death, and devil as a mother hen, or a mother bird would protect her young with her wings. I am not a farmer, but I have heard of instances where fires have occurred on a farm, and afterwards was found a dead mother hen. But kept safe under her wings were her chicks still alive. The mother hen gave her life to preserve the life of her chicks. This is the image of God’s love toward us in Jesus Christ – one who gave himself over to death to

protect us from the fiery wrath to come. And even now people of God, the Lord calls out to each one of us, that we might come to him and find refuge under his wings.

But this Mosaic in the Church of Dominus Fleuit is not only a monument of the love of God. It also stands as a reminder of the exceeding sinfulness of the human heart and represents our hatred toward our the God who loves us. In our hard hearted sinfulness we reject the advances of God's love and mercy, and instead willingly embrace our own self destruction. As Proverbs 8:36 says, "*All who hate God love death.*"

This reality of course breaks God's heart who wants nothing for us except that we live in His loving embrace, taking refuge under his wings, where he would protect us even from ourselves and our destructive sinful tendencies. Which of course is why he sent His Son Jesus Christ, that we might take refuge under his wings.

Let us now look at our text this morning and see how this all unfolds.

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem, and <sup>31</sup> *At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you."* <sup>32</sup> *And he said to them, "Go and tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I finish my course.*

Given what we know about the Pharisees, I seriously doubt that they are genuinely concerned for Jesus here. The Pharisees were warning Jesus, not to protect him, but to get him out of their area. They were threatening him, and not so subtly revealing their true desires for Jesus as well.

Jesus tells the Pharisees to go and carry a message to Herod. This implies that the Pharisees were actually in league with Herod. And Jesus' response in the face of such danger and threats is not run away or to be more nuanced and engage in understanding dialogue. No. Jesus responds to this death threat with an insult, and with a resolve to finish his work.

Commentators will suggest that Jesus calling Herod a Fox is a reference to Herod's sly character, or his nature as a destroyer. Jesus wants to gather Jerusalem like a mother hen gathers her chicks and protect them. But Herod is a fox who is keen on invading the hen house and destroying God's people.

But others have noted something else in the word Fox. In Greek, the word "fox" is actually Vixen – female fox. This is probably be a backhanded insult to Herod by identifying him with Herodias – his brother's wife whom he took. Jesus could be suggesting here that this Herod whom the Pharisees were trying to get Jesus scared of, and who are in league with, had lost his manliness by giving all his power to his wife. She has the real power. She was the one who pulled the strings to have John the Baptist put to death. Herod isn't going to do anything.

Jesus has work to do. He is not going to be dissuaded by death threats. He has demons to cast out, he has people to heal, and he is going to be working today, tomorrow and third day He will **finish his course**. And besides, Jerusalem is the prophet's slaughter-house. It cannot be that a prophet perish away from Jerusalem.

And upon thinking about the murderous reputation of Jerusalem, the city of God, the Lord breaks into lamentation.

<sup>34</sup> *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!* <sup>35</sup> *Behold, your house is forsaken.*

Many prophets were killed in Jerusalem. Scripture only records for us two: Zechariah in 2 Chron. 24, and Uriah in Jeremiah 26. Although as we heard in our Jeremiah 26 passage they certainly tried to kill Jeremiah also. But Jerusalem seems to be more than just the physical city. It seems to

represent the heart of the people, the place where all of man's true sinful tendencies are manifested and revealed.

In Matthew 23, Jesus lays the blame for the deaths of all the prophets upon the feet of the religious leadership in Jerusalem saying – *“so that on you may come the all the righteous blood shed on the land, from the blood of righteous and Abel, to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.”*

Jerusalem is the place where prophets go to die. It is the city of where's God's name dwells, but which exists as a continual violation of third commandment, for they forever take God's name in vain, by killing those Prophets who come in the name of the Lord to bring them back to God. Truly, if you wanted to see what the human heart looked like as a city, look no further than Jerusalem. A murderous city, filled with the blood of all the righteous. And Jesus, the our last great prophet is going to share in the same fate. So that by our murdering of God's own Son, humanity would wake up and take refuge from our sin under his wings, and be saved.

*“how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you would not.”*

Jesus laments the stubborn unbelief and violent hatred of God's own people for their God. Jesus alludes to imagery that is used through out the Scripture of God being a like a mother bird hovering over her people and protecting them with her wings. Jesus' willingness to save them, to even die for them, is sadly and painfully met with man's unwillingness to be saved. And unless man repents and embrace the savior's love, he will not be saved. In fact, his house will be destroyed, as it was prophesied in the past.

Jer. 12:7 – God says through Jeremiah the prophet, *“I will forsake my house, abandon my inheritance; I will give the one I love into the hands of her enemies.”*

And again in Jer. 26:9, our OT reading for the day – *“Why have you prophesied in the name of the Lord saying, ‘This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant?’*

Jesus, like the prophets of old, like Jeremiah, is prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem, and lamenting its inevitable desolation. Jerusalem will respond to Jesus the way Jerusalem always responds to prophets. They will kill him.

And then Jesus says, *And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’”*

And here Luke is referring to the Triumphal Entry when Jesus would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey to the shouts of “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” The people will receive Jesus on Palm Sunday as the King. And how is the king of love going to be treated? He will be arrested, beaten, falsely accused, tortured, mocked, crucified, and murdered.

But in this the love of God is manifested. Because it was on the cross that Jesus as a mother Hen spread forth his wings, stretched out his arms on the hard wood of the cross, to bring all humanity under the refuge of his wings. There he saves us and protects us all from our sin: its inevitable and certain destructive consequences in our lives, and most importantly, from God’s wrath and judgment against it. It is there on the cross where we truly can say with the Psalmist - *“How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The Children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings.”*

Will you take refuge under his wings today? Will you come to the Lord Jesus and flee from the wrath to come? Will you answer the call of God on your life? Will you heed the prophet of God? Will you actually soften your heart, repent of your sins, run away from the burning city of Jerusalem, the city of destruction, which is mystically Sodom and Egypt?

Will you renounce your slavery to sin, your debauchery with death, and the despair of drugs? All this resides within you, and you must reject it all.

Within each one of you, there is a city that kills the prophets, forsakes the Word of the Lord, and rejects the love of God. If you remain in that city, if you remain in that hard heartedness in your relation toward God, then your end is to be destroyed, just as Jerusalem of old was, time and time again.

And the Lord Jesus already manifested that he has the authority and the power to overthrow whole cities, when he brought prophesied and called forth the physical destruction of the city of Jerusalem in AD 70, when the Roman Army came and destroyed the city and the temple, leaving it absolutely desolate. Jesus proved himself to be a true prophet of God. And his word is true today still, and his warnings are still just as urgent. The Lord prophesied that not only Jerusalem of old will be destroyed, but so too will everyone who does not repent of their sins and take refuge under the wings of the cross.

Revelation calls Jerusalem Babylon, saying:

*“Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!  
She has become a dwelling place for demons,  
a haunt for every unclean spirit,  
a haunt for every unclean bird,  
a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast.*

But in Jesus Christ there is a new Jerusalem. A New and Heavenly Jerusalem where righteousness dwells. Where sinners are washed clean in the blood of the lamb. Where the River of life flows bring life wherever it goes, and where the Tree of Life brings healing to the nations.

Which Jerusalem will you choose? Will you remain in the Jerusalem that kills the prophets? Will you continue to embrace your hatred for God's

life giving love in Jesus Christ? Or will you come to the New and Heavenly Jerusalem, where God's people are kept in perfect peace?

The same choice that Jesus held out for Jerusalem of old is the same choice that is laid out for you today. Listen to the word of God when he says to you -

*“Come out of her, my people,  
lest you take part in her sins,  
lest you share in her plagues;  
<sup>5</sup>for her sins are heaped high as heaven,  
and God has remembered her iniquities.*

Flee from the wrath to come, and come out of her, and take refuge underneath the loving wings of Jesus Christ, where our sins are forgiven, and you share in his blessings and life and love. Amen.