

“The Fox and the Lamb”

At some time in our lives we may see or meet a fox. They are quite beautiful with their striking red coat, bushy white tale, alluring big eyes, and lively bounce in their step. But farmers don't like foxes around their chicken house, vineyard or small animals. They kill and eat them. As beautiful as foxes are, they can be sly, cunning, and voraciously destructive.

Foxes come with two legs and in all circumstances, too. Beautifully smooth, alluring tongue; striking mental agility; and a lively imagination that can fool the undiscerning as being visionary. The Apostle Paul defines them as “enemies of the Cross of Christ,” whose destiny is destruction because their god is their belly and their glory is in their shame, since the real intent of their hearts revolves around earthly things.

Innocent souls in the villages and towns of Philippi were hungering to know more about Jesus the Christ, Lamb of God in whom Paul lived before them and preached to them. But self-centered foxes, who picked up just enough words and phrases to sound authentic, began declaring teachings that turned eyes and hearts toward things of the world rather than truths of eternity. The potential power of God in their lives, as revealed in the life, death, resurrection, and living presence of Christ, was compromised.

This angered the Apostle Paul in Philippi, and it angered Jesus with the Pharisees. The Pharisees, bound to the letter of the Law, were willing to do anything to anyone who believed outside the box of that “letter of the Law.” In their hypocritical cunning, they approached Jesus as if they were His friend, to warn Him that Herod Antipas, who was also threatened by Jesus, desired to kill Him. That was true. But the real reason they went to warn Jesus was to drive Him deeper into the territory of Herod Antiphias so that Herod could kill Him. That way, both were rid of that pesky preacher. It was little foxes maneuvering for a big fox.

It is so fascinating and magnificent to watch Jesus handle treachery. To paraphrase, Jesus said to them: “You go back and tell that fox that it is not yet My time. I *will* die and fulfill the reason God sent Me...but I will not die in Judea. I *will* suffer, die and rise in Jerusalem according to God's plan; not Herod's. I know who I am before God; and I know who Herod is before Satan. I still have sermons to preach, bodies to heal, demons to cast out, and lives to transform before I face the cross and death. It is not yet My

time...;” **so all of you back-off!**” Jesus didn’t say that last part. It’s a “Myrtleism” I thought fit the occasion.

Jesus rejoiced in those who were His own; those who believed in Him although they did not completely understand this amazing plan of God. But our Lord wept for Jerusalem, the Holy City of God, because Truth walked within her, cried to her, was willing to die for her; but she refused. Hear again God’s heart in the words of Jesus as God pleaded for the souls of God’s people: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”

And because they rejected the Truth among them, this is Christ’s prophecy for the city of Jerusalem: “Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see Me again until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

Here, evil threatens with the cunning of a fox. The Mother hen laments because her little ones are exposed; but refuse protection. What more can the Mother hen do but stand up to the fox and seek shelter to protect her young? And that shelter is in the arms of God who is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in the time of trouble.

In Jesus Christ the Lamb of God, God destroyed the power of sly, cunning, soul destructive Satan. Because we are the apple of God’s eye, God will always be a redeeming, nurturing, protecting Mother hen desiring to deliver us from evil. In Jesus the Christ, God’s plan...God’s desire...is to lead humankind beyond words and ideas, into a heart and soul relationship of boundless, steadfast love that shelters in the times of storm; that puts a song of hope in our hearts regardless of the medical diagnosis; that puts praise on our lips for that better job that is coming while we stand, in tears, with a pink slip in our hand; that love that sees the once doubting, angry family member or friend finally nestled under God’s wings, dancing in the palm of God’s loving hand.

Whatever/Whoever your fox or foxes might be, **do not** coil under the threat. Rather, tell them about the Lamb of God, “who takes away the sins and pains of the world. The Lamb of God who brings everything under His control, and will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body. “Therefore, my brothers and sisters...stand firm in the Lord!” **This** is how we stand, in faith, against the foxy wiles of Satan. **This** is how we humble ourselves before the mighty hand of the Lamb of

God...for **He** is our victory. **He is** our victory! **He is** our **victory!**

Thanks be to God for this indescribable gift of love, power, and hope.
Amen.