

Images For The Journey

2019, Pastor Debbie Bronkema

<http://www.pvillepresby.org>

“In an effort to reach people with different perspectives and preferences, we’re testing an automated speech to text transcription for Pastor Debbie’s sermon. This process is not 100% accurate but provides a rough transcription of the sermon Pastor Debbie preached. Pastor Debbie preaches from a manuscript but often goes off script as led by the spirit, making the original manuscript an inaccurate representation of the Sunday service.”

In this sermon, Pastor Debbie asks us to consider think about whether we are allowing our fear to keep us from the mission God is calling us to. "He said to them, ‘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.” --Luke 13:32 (Originally Preached on Sunday, March 17, 2019 at Pleasantville Presbyterian Church)

Scripture: Luke 13:31-35

<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=419846125>

[0:00] From the Gospel of Luke after thirteen, beginning with verse thirty one.

At that very hour, some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here."

For Herod wants to kill you.

He said to them. 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.

Yet today, tomorrow and the next day I must be on my way because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem,

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?

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.

The word of the Lord. Thanks God.

[1:19] Please pray with me.

[1:23] Dear God may the words of my mouth and the listening ears of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight.

Oh, God, our rock and our redeemer Amen

Sermon: "Images For The Journey"

[1:37] This Scripture reading is to him packed full of images in just five verses. We hear Herod called a fox, the three day mission of Jesus referenced. Which brings to mind for us the cross and the resurrection.

We picture the imagery involved with all the prophets who have been rejected and killed for their service in Jerusalem over the centuries.

Then we get to the mother hen, gathering her brood under her wings, and then we see us not letting ourselves be gathered.

We get Jerusalem as a house. And finally, the words blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, which is the exact scripture we hear repeated as Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday.

[2:26] What a perfect scripture passing for this season of Lent. Lent is a time to make space to reimagine what it means to follow Jesus.

I love the words of the anthem today. They were perfect for Lent.

Helping us think again about what does it actually mean when we say we follow Jesus?

These images, these metaphors they can serve to wake us up and move us off of automatic pilot, Help us see what it is we're missing about who Jesus is and what he asks of us.

When Pharisees, tell Jesus **that** Herod wants to kill him.

[3:13] Well, this is a threat to be taken seriously.

This is **Herod** who beheaded John The Baptist.

Herod has the ability to carry through on what he threatens.

But Jesus, he does not see the threat level raised in front of him as a priority.

He calls him a fox, an animal that people associate with being both wise and sneaky out for its own agenda.

Jesus doesn't allow Herod's threats to make him bow to Herod's agenda.

Instead, he says, I'm going to be curing people and I'm going to be casting out illness, and I am not changing my plan, My mission out of fear.

Fear is not going to make me stop picking up the people on the margins and lifting them into new life.

[4:11] One of the automatic pilot traps we fall into is putting too much of our effort in to being secure.

We react to our fears and we let them set our agenda.

Listen to these words from Scott Baiter, say from his book, Following Jesus in a culture of fear.

Instead of being courageous, we're becoming content to be safe.

We fear excessively when we allow the avoidance of evil to take priority over the pursuit of the good.

Our overwhelming fears need themselves to be overwhelmed by bigger and better things.

Maybe Jesus was afraid when he heard that Herod was after him.

It would have made sense for him to feel that way. But he did not stay stuck in the fear.

He said, Listen, I am casting out demons and I am performing cure.

And then he began to talk about Jerusalem as the place where things would come to a head.

He did not pretend that the danger wasn't real.
He just said no to giving it the power to stop him from doing the good he could do on the way.

[5:41] The hen image is particularly powerful. If you've ever heard the story of what a mother hen does in the midst of a fire, ours are terrifying for humans and even more for animals who are often unable to escape. There are many documented cases of chicken coops catching fire and a farmer coming out to find the mother hen lifeless and lifting her up. You find that she has surrounded her life with, and they have lived through the fire.

[6:21] Jesus. We're shadowing here his own death for us, both in the imagery of the three days and by calling to mind the image of the mother hen giving her life for her chicks, Jesus is telling us that God sees us and calls us into relationship that ultimately gives us life. But then he goes on to point out that over and over again, we run away from that relationship and we try to find our own way.

[6:58] If we allow ourselves to see these images of God calling us into relationship and us running out of every embrace God offers, we might just recognize that we are called to make changes in our lives.

The kind of change scriptures like this one call us to involve seeing the world's pain in order to meet it with the love of Christ, allowing ourselves to listen closely to Jesus to be drawn near.

Oh, it's true that if we pay attention to Jesus, we might find that we are made uncomfortable. Scripture is filled with words of lament, sorrow for how the world is and how God wants it to be.

And it is not God that has moved away from us.

But we that we have moved away from God moved to safer ground, less challenging ground, more comfortable, easier ground found. It doesn't scare us so much.

[8:04] Listen to these words from Bob. Here's who's the founder of World Vision.

Let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God.

That is a hard prayer to pray. But if we let ourselves here that prayer to pray, let my heart be broken by the things that break the heart of God.

The power of the good we are called to be in the world will overwhelm the fear it keeps us so stuck.

[8:44] My dad has been reflecting lately on life in different ways.

I talked to him yesterday. He didn't know what I was writing a sermon about and he wanted to share with me that he had been thinking about what made him do the outreach things in his life that were risky,

and, well, what did you come up with?

Told me the first one he remembered is he had. He was principal.

He was a very young principal of an elementary school, and the fifth grade teacher had done a pen pal program with kids from another country, and she came to him and said, I have one kid from Uganda left over. You're not going to let that happen, right?

And so he said, Okay, and he started writing letters.

My dad was a letter writer, always. Now he's an email writer.

[9:36] And he wrote the letter to this young boy or, um, George Willie was his name and he said they kept writing for years from when the boy was ten until eighteen.

At eighteen, there was something happening Uganda and this boy didn't who was now a young man hadn't done something wrong, but he had gotten on the wrong side of somebody with power.

And he wrote my dad that he was in jail and that they were sentencing him to death.

And he asked my dad to have people pray.

And he told him the day that he was sentenced to die and and they prayed, and my dad remembers sitting with my mom at the time and praying and crying.

[10:25] And then a few weeks later he got a note on a piece of tissue paper that said, I am alive. And then a few weeks after that, a letter saying on the day of his execution, the jailer came to take him and he opened the door and he whispered in his ear, run boy, Ron.

[10:53] And he kept running until he was so far away that they did not look for him.

[11:01] My dad told me that when he tells people about that, they often say, Well, did he ask you for money?

Because that's the fear. I might put myself out there and it might be a con or it might be some sort of a game someone's playing, And the reality is, if my dad said he once got a letter from him saying, Don't send me anything,

If you send me anything, you put me at risk because people will want what I had.

All I want is to know that there are other people in the world you care about.

[11:39] I came to Thiss page in my planner and it has quotes at the top and it said, What would you do if you were prey today?

[11:53] Jesus did not live his life in here. He was courageous, leading and speaking up, breathing new life and healing into people who were left behind by the world.

He did not come in his own name for his own power. It came in the name of the Lord.

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

The one who comes in the name of the Lord has a vision of hope and peace, of justice and healing designed to meet the world's pain.

That's my heritage. It comes in the fear of losing his power and in commitment to himself.

Above all, you and I, we are called to see the world as it is the notice, the places where we can meet people where they are with commitment to grace and to joy.

We are called to live outside of our comfort zones and find our way to stand solidly, under the protective wings of the one who loved us enough to travel all the way to the cross.

In Jesus Name, Amen.