

SERMON - LENT 2

21 February 2016 @ St Michael & All Angels

Fr Christopher Durrant

Luke 13.31-end

*“How often have I desired to gather your children
as a hen gathers her brood under her wings”*

+ In the name of God;
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen

Q) “If your church were an animal, what animal would it be?”

As an ordinand with South West Ministry Training Course, this was a question we were often asked to consider. This was to help us reflect upon how we understood our church communities, and how our church communities understood themselves.

Were our sending parishes like a much a loved Labrador dog? – loyal, friendly, and protective

Or perhaps like an Elephant – with big ears for listening, long memories and often unmovable!

Or maybe like an exotic bird– extraordinarily beautiful, but rare and difficult to breed.

Here at St. Michael’s, perhaps our affinity with the peregrine falcons that nest high on the spire speak of the character of our community; at least to the city outside. Perhaps you can think of an animal which best represents our St. Michael's...

In the Gospel we heard today, Jesus likens himself to an animal to better communicate his message to us. Luke records Jesus’ desire to be like a mother hen; to gather the children of

Jerusalem under his wings. Jesus desires to gather up the weak and vulnerable, those caught and brutalised by life, and bring them under the protection of his care.

Here is a fact: Nowhere in NT canonical scripture is Jesus recorded as saying he like an animal, other than like a mother hen!

In C. S. Lewis' beautiful stories about Narnia, the strong leader symbolising Jesus is a lion, called 'Aslan'. The animal C. S. Lewis thinks Jesus is most like is a kind and mighty *lion-king*.

In scripture, John the Baptist calls out to Jesus declaring: He is the '*Lamb* of God'. And our devotions towards Jesus as 'Lamb' may sound familiar, but Jesus does not call himself a Lamb.

Rather, Jesus likens himself to a mother hen.

Thus, the characteristics of an ideal mother help us reflect upon how Jesus understands himself – as one demonstrating unconditional love, nurturing tenderness, and sacrificial strength.

And Jesus' self-casting as Hen is all the more revealing of God because Jesus, just moments before, cast King Herod as Fox. And as we know, foxes and hens are predator and prey.

Q) "If your *God* were an animal, what animal would it be?"

A Mother Hen: desirous to gather all her lost brood, chicks and foxes alike, under her wings.

Our Jesus Christ,

our Mother Church;

our Mother Hen.

Amen.

Luke 13.31-end (NRSV)

The Lament over Jerusalem

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, ‘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 outside of 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.’”