

## THE FOX IN THE HENHOUSE

Russia's Putin is a feared dictator/leader who has decided that The Ukraine belongs to Russia, it always has and always will. So he has decided to invade and wreck unparalleled horror on the people of that breakaway nation.

What is that rogue doing and do you think he knows and when will he stop? You talk about a fox in the henhouse: is there a more apt description? If there is I would not know what it is. Putin is a fox and he wants to destroy and kill. He's not the first! Have a look with me at that passage from Luke about Herod we read today – an intriguing passage, filled with destruction and malice. Herod wants to kill Jesus. Who says so? The Pharisees - of all people.

You have these two camps—friends and foes--on the other, you have those Pharisees who conspired to have Jesus killed; and in the middle maybe you have this group who didn't want Herod to kill him, but weren't ready to leave everything to follow him either.

In some ways that is where I think most of us are. We're happy to be Christian, as long as being Christian doesn't ask us to do anything that might get us in trouble. We're happy to follow Jesus, wear a cross around our neck, maybe even invite a friend to church; and even though we don't agree with everything we learn via "The Media", we're not lobbying for censorship. Even though we're not completely happy with the culture in which we live, we're not fighting for a wall to be built to keep outside influences out.

I think this is something we all believe is possible, that we can be simultaneously Christian and proud Canadians, that we can follow our faith without being too odd, that we can be a friend to Jesus without losing our place in Herod's court.

Jesus seems to know that we like to hedge our bets and have a foot in each camp. The Pharisees can't just up and follow Jesus; you see, they had kids to feed. They couldn't make the Empire mad or they might lose their influence, and they couldn't make this puppet king angry or they might well lose their lives.

Normal enough, I'd say, and you wouldn't think they'd lose themselves in the process. They weren't doing anything wrong, bowing to Herod, helping out Jesus a little on the side.

I tend to think this way of life is possible, that I can be part of the world I live in without falling victim to its hedonism that we see all around us without falling prey to sin and vice. But this is a dangerous game to play.

Like fire, it's fine as long as it stays in the fireplace; you can cook with it, stay warm with it, but give it an inch and your house is burning.

Like love that you think you can keep at bay and next thing you know you're doing things you never thought you'd do, saying things you thought you'd never say.

We think we can control that fox, bow to him Monday through Friday while maintaining our true loyalty to Christ, until one day we're asked to choose sides.

"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often I have desired to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

Herod is a fox--and if you think you can serve two masters, if you think you can handle it all, you better be careful because given the chance Herod will eat you, take everything, and leave you empty.

Like the Pharisees before us, we must navigate through two competing worlds. We choose to follow Christ to the cross and our friends who are willing to compromise their values and

journey towards success, wealth and influence. But don't you see--the fox is in the hen house--and the fox is not in this for your salvation.

The fox is in the hen house--as credit cards promise happiness, but only deliver debt and worry. American Episcopalian preacher Barbara Brown Taylor got it right when she points out :  
“Given the number of animals available, it is curious that Jesus chooses a hen.”

Yes, a hen, no less!

Where is the biblical precedent for that? What about the mighty eagle of Exodus, or Hosea's stealthy leopard? What about the proud lion of Judah, mowing down his enemies with a roar? Compared to any of those, a mother hen does not inspire much confidence. No wonder some of the chicks decided to go with the fox.”

And that is the way of Jesus. Turning every single one of our ideas and conceptions about him upside down. Which will he choose? Lion or hen? First or last? Vulnerable or victorious? Throne or cross? He surprises me every day of my life. The fox is in the hen house--as the news assaults us with a continual alarm, fear for who is out there, and painting opponents as idiots and liars.

The fox is in the hen house--telling us working overtime will pay off in time, but when the budget gets tight the fox will lay you off and wish you good luck.

The fox is in the hen house--and if you think it isn't real, look where the path led the Pharisees. Their house was left desolate as the Rome they had compromised with destroyed their Temple just a few years after Christ's death.

We are in a difficult position. Like the Pharisees we must, on occasion, bow to the fox, as there is money needed to be made, children to feed, and we don't want to look too strange or we'll lose all our friends. But do not be fooled. The fox is not worthy of our faith though the fox would like us to believe otherwise.

As people of faith in a culture of fear, we must be about calling the fox a fox, talking about truth in a world of misstatements, talking about what love really is in a world of pleasure and pleasing, prioritizing our lives by what really matters

We must be wise, we must speak out, we must because if we don't the fox will do it for us and lead our children down the path to destruction.

The fox is in the hen house, and only Christ has laid down his life for you.

As Barbara Brown Taylor says: “Jesus won't be king of the jungle in this or any other story. What he will be is a mother hen, who stands between the chicks and those who mean to do them harm. She has no fangs, no claws, no rippling muscles. All she has is her willingness to shield her babies with her own body. If the fox wants them, he will have to kill her first. And that's the amazing God who laid down his life for me. The amazing God who told Herod: [“Tell that fox that I've no time for him right now.”](#) Not distracted from his tasks, diverted from his aims, but serving, serving, serving. Giving, giving, giving. And that's the amazing God who has claimed me and you as God's own. Thanks be to God!

*Let us pray.* O Lord, gather us in together and show us truly who you are and who the world is. If we are asked to choose sides, may we always be on yours. We pray these things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.