

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I. Mother Quail

A. This story comes from an essay by Francine Rivers in Earth Psalms.

1. “Some years ago, while working at our warehouse, Rick called me on the intercom and said a mother quail was out back with her chicks.
2. “I came running, and we watched from the delivery doorway as the quail pecked for seeds and bugs among the grass behind our building.
3. “The chicks scurried around their mother like puffs of tan cotton, unaware of us – or of danger lurking close by.
4. “We spotted a cat crouched and sneaking toward them.
5. “Rick was about to grab an airplane gear to heave at the predator when we both heard a high-pitched chirrup from somewhere above us.
6. “The mother quail immediately spread her wings, the chicks fled beneath, and she flattened to the ground-motionless, protecting her babies with her body, and perfectly camouflaged in the grass.
7. “We stared, amazed.
8. “Then, out of nowhere, the father quail appeared.
9. “He had been perched on the edge of the roof next door, watching and ready to signal any sign of danger.
10. “Down he came, right at that cat.
 - Bam! Startled, the cat jumped back.
 - Again, the male defended his family, and the frightened cat took off.”

B. This story gives us a wonderful insight into the LOVE that Jesus speaks about in our Gospel reading.

1. Jesus' protective concern for Jerusalem and her people is compared to a hen gathering her chicks under her wings.

2. Jesus laments: *"How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"*

3. What an amazing SACRIFICIAL LOVE Jesus is showing in this gentle action.

4. That's the point of the whole thing – Jesus loves us THIS much.

5. Here is Jesus reaching out to these people **and US** with the same self-giving comforting love of a mother hen for her children.

6. And still, as Jesus spreads those protective wings of love – we scatter and race around like so many scurrying chicks in the midst of danger.



"A Hen Protecting Her Chicks," Klearchos Kipontsis from Paleo Faliro, Athens, Greece

The Second Sunday in Lent C
March 13, 2022, 9:30 a.m.

II. Ignoring Prophets

A. The reason for Jesus' wish to gather the people is found in the first part of his lament about Jerusalem: *"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!"*

1. What Prophets do we ignore?

2. Who speaks the unpleasant truth we don't want to hear?

- Those who challenge our way of thinking and what we have always heard?

3. The truth about our environmental crisis that we give lip service to but ignore.

4. We would rather go on with our gas guzzling ways than seriously address climate change that is slowly but surely endangering our planet.

5. The truth about our country's racist past.

6. Rather than come to grips with the fact that our comfort may very well have come at another's expense, and how we treat one another now, we'd rather legislate such notions into oblivion by forbidding their teaching and shoving them back into the closet of history.

B. And what about the Prophets who call us to a right relationship with God?

1. We might salute Bishop Curry when we hear him say "If it's not about love, it's not about God," but do we act on that – do we live it out in our lives?

2. Do we truly reach out IN LOVE to those we encounter every day?

3. Or do we make snide comments behind their backs; look down on those in need; question the choices and lifestyles of those trying to live as God has made them to be?

4. And if we don't live that LOVE than what does that say about how we are living our GOD?

5. Who are the prophets God sends us today – and how do we treat them?

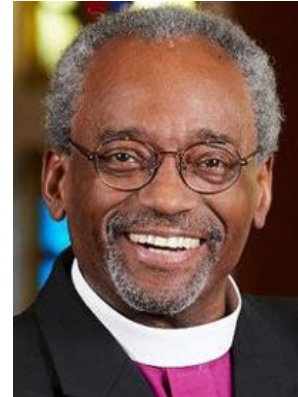
6. Do we listen and engage; or do we say, "that's nice," and keep on as if nothing has changed?

7. Who are the Prophets we ignore?

C. One such Prophet, I believe, is Diana Butler Bass.

1. Wikipedia describes her as "an American historian of Christianity and an advocate for progressive Christianity. Bass is currently an independent scholar who writes on American religion and culture."

2. In an interview for "Patheos," she says: "*I've been writing about 'the decline' [of Western religion] for the last ten years and making the argument that it's really about a shift or transformation, and that religious institutions will have to adjust to this change to make it in the future.*"



3. *“I’ve talked about it so much and kept wondering, why don’t people seem to be getting it?”*

4. *“And then about four years ago I started to dawn on me that it really isn’t about institutions or the church.*

- “It’s about the way in which we understand and experience God.

5. ***“That’s what a church fundamentally is – a community where God is experienced.***

6. *“And I kept thinking about my own church experience and what was missing there, because I felt like there was some gap between what the church was offering and where my soul was going.*

7. *“As I began to explore that gap, I realized that the church – even great, wonderful, progressive, vibrant churches – we’re still proclaiming the idea that God was in Heaven and that the primary reason for going to church was about me getting saved.*

8. *“When you talk about that with progressives, it means us doing God’s work here on earth and serving the poor and doing great social justice work, but ultimately it was still about a distant God who was far away from us, who asked us to do things, and if we did them, then everything would be great.*

9. *“And the moment I realized that this was really the God being proclaimed in the church, I thought, I just don’t believe in that God anymore.*

10. *“That’s the fundamental realization I’ve come to in the last couple of years.*

11. *“We don’t really have a problem with institutions or with churches, we have a problem about God.*

12. ***“Our institutions are still locating God in the very same place they did 500 years ago, in a far away heavenly realm.***

13. *“So I began to say, what if God wasn’t really so far away?”*

14. *What if we took the Incarnation really, really, really seriously?*

15. *“And what if that means that God’s body is really here?”*

16. *“When I got to that internal spiritual switch, it was almost as if an entirely new spiritual path opened up for me... It’s going out into the world and trying to find that God.”*

III. Finding God

A. What does it mean for us to be challenged by the Prophets of our day?

1. How can we strive to make our world a better place:
environmentally, socially, and spiritually?

2. What does it mean for US to go out into the world and find the
God that is among us?

3. The God in whose image each and every one of us made;
- the God of whom we are each a part.

4. What does it mean to live our lives in that light?
- What does it mean to live an “if it’s not about love, it’s not
about God” kind of life?

B. It would probably mean a radical shift in our lives – something similar
to what Abram experienced in our OT lesson.

1. For Abram listened to God and responded – and the results were
life changing.

2. Abram believed – and so must we – we must venture forth to
serve the God that is among us.

3. There may be times in our lives when we desperately need to tuck
under Jesus’ gentle wings for rest and comfort, but we can’t stay there forever.

4. We are called to be God’s people IN the world, bring the God
who is in the world to those who have forgotten or were never introduced.

5. We are called to speak the unpleasant truth to the issues of our
day, and not hide with our heads in the sand, hoping it will go away.

6. It might mean rattling a few cages – it might mean putting some people on edge – but such is the cost of being a prophet.

7. And as the old preacher said, “we are to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.”

8. And as we do, God will be with us – the God who is not on some throne in heaven far away, but here with us every step of the way – God will help us, guide us, and LOVE us in the way God would have us go.

9. As we read in our psalm today: “*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?*”

10. When we keep this in our hearts, we can be prophets in the world – challenging the things we know are not right – and living into God’s love.

11. And remember, “If it’s not about love – it’s not about God.”

Conclusion

The Taize Community has a chant using the first verse of our psalm.

So, I invite you to join me and you pick up the tune.

The words are:

*The Lord is my light, my light and salvation;
In God I trust, God I trust.*

Sing tune:

Try it with me.

CHANT – Amen.

