I am getting old.

I do not know how much longer that I am going to be able to do epic driving trips but yesterday was another epic day of driving. I drove 850 miles and logged a car time of 13 hours and 30 minutes. We will not talk about how much gas I ended up spending. Then, I am not sure if I would recommend driving that much on a spring forward day.

I drove Bethany over to Richmond, Minnesota, so she could grab a ride back to Marshall to finish her last seven weeks at SMSU and then I grabbed lunch at Five Guys with Morgen. During our drive, Bethany and I talked about the text and her words were, I am not sure where you can go with that text. Yeah, me neither.

The Gospel reading that we heard today is only five verses long. However, there could be a lot in there to unpack and many directions that we could go. I really wrestled with my direction because some of the directions that the preacher could take could get you in a lot of hot water from the individuals who are in the pews listening. Do you take the risk, that is the question?

The answer to that question for PJ is that on this day, I am not willing to take much of a risk. However, we will dive into some of the areas where we can and will go deeper at a later time.

Today, we are in the thirteenth chapter of Luke. Jesus has been traveling to Jerusalem since chapter nine. We are uncertain of all the details and the true motive behind the Pharisees, but they seem to be pushing him to get to Jerusalem a little quicker. Their words start our passage off with a bang. Hear them again:

Just then some Pharisees came up and said, "Run for your life! Herod's got your number. He's out to kill you!"

Jesus is not phased or troubled. In fact, we can say that he was courageous and that these words did not retract him from his business at hand. He insists that he is not going to allow anyone to deter him from his work on hand. Let us listen in to the words that Jesus gives to the Pharisees that approach him:

"Tell that fox that I've no time for him right now. Today and tomorrow I'm busy clearing out the demons and healing the sick; the third day I'm wrapping things up."

We can clearly see by his response that when he hears about the threat from Herod, he does not run and he has no intention to hide. Now, make no mistake about it; he is not naïve of the possible danger in front of him. But he fully understands that he has work to do. The work that Jesus has to do includes casting out demons and curing illness. There is almost an urgency that you can sense in his work.

In our Tuesday morning bible study, we really focused in on the fact that Jesus was living his life with a sense of purpose and identity. This led us to begin to converse with one another about our life and are we living with clarity and purpose. I really like the thought of clarity and purpose. I think that it would benefit us greatly if we, as individuals, had clarity and purpose in our lives and then the same is true for us as a church. I think that it would help us at Bay View if we had a better understanding of our true identity.

As I got further and further away from Tuesday, I could not get away from Jesus first words. Go tell that fox. I am not sure if you are aware of it or not, but fox is one of the three metaphors that we see in this passage. The other two metaphors are relating to the care of Jesus to a mothering hen and then the city of Jerusalem to a house.

Before I dive into this too deep, let me start with simply giving you two definitions of a fox in the first century. These are definitions that we may be familiar with but remembering them might help us to understand where Jesus is going with this metaphor.

In the Greco-Roman world, "fox" could symbolize deceit and malice as well as intelligent and strength. Then, within the rabbinic literature, the word fox is regarded as a unclean pest that should be avoided, at

all cost. Thus, there is some hostility in Jesus response, yet there is also compassion in his voice and remarks when he states the following:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killer of prophets, abuser of the messengers of God! How often I've longed to gather your children, gather your children like a hen, Her brood safe under her wings.

Even when individuals hate him and want to kill him and they do not want him to love them, he wants to do the following three things:

- love them
- give them compassion
- protect them.

If we allow it, this passage can be a power-play in the season of Lent. Remember, Lent is about our journey to the cross. We need to realize that Lent is not simply about mourning loss, injustice, and error; it is also about using imagery and symbols of our everyday world to communicate our frustrations, fears and our hopes.

I am not sure about you, but as I look around our community and our world; there are many stories that can be lifted up from the pages that can bring up frustrations and fears. Yet, there is hope. That is the power in prophecy. We can share and lament on the present but we can point to the future where there is hope.

I want to briefly highlight fear with this sentence: We fear excessively when we allow the **avoidance** of evil to trump the pursuit of good.

In case you did not pick it up, the words of imagery and symbols can be linked to metaphors. Remember, we talked about the fact that there are three metaphors in this passage. On Wednesday, we also looked at metaphors in confirmation. However, it was not about this passage. We were looking at Christian maturity and talking about whether we were still on milk or solid food.

Metaphoric language can be extremely powerful. The metaphoric language that Jesus used in this passage caused a stir. It shook the audience out of their complacency. I really believe that we, as a church, as we travel towards the cross, should have our commitment to God's justice and mercy in the world strengthened. This is what the metaphors were dealing with.

Hopefully, you heard the word justice and that word rang a bell for you. We are highlighting our baptismal vows this year and justice is one of our baptismal vows. The exact vow says the following:

strive for justice and peace in all the earth

If you are keeping track, this is the fourth time that I have highlighted this baptismal vow. But, do we fully understand the promise? I have not shared the promise in my sermon this year, so let me highlight it with definitions:

Justice means "to act or treat fairly" and "to appreciate properly."

Justice involves not only your personal behavior but how people are treated in society

Peace means "to be complete" and "to be made whole."

Peace involves life-giving relationships with God, others, and the creation that make us whole.

Now, we have a understanding of justice and peace but what about society?

Society means "how people are organized to live together in a large community."

Some of the goals for living together in society include having the basic necessities of life: enough to eat, clean water to drink, someplace to live, basic health care and education, peace, safety, and freedom to participate.

Loving our neighbor includes not only individual actions but policies that protect the weak in society from being harmed by the strong.

Our baptismal vows are some serious business. This vow is based on a passage from Romans twelve. Let us close out today with that scripture:

Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.

Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."

Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.

May we have the courage to live out our baptismal vow and strive for justice and peace in all the earth. **AMEN.**