

As the war in Ukraine rages on, there have been a lot of videos hitting our news stations and social media feeds attempting to give us a glimpse of not only the jarring and horrific reality of what life is like on the ground for soldiers and refugees, but also showing us glimmers of hope and light in the midst of devastating darkness. One of these such videos crossed my feeds earlier this week, and while it was just that, a glimmer of hope, it also brought a stark question to mind of just how this could be the world we live in where this is the reality that our siblings are experiencing.

This video was taken from within a bunker inside Ukraine where a large group of people, one can assume several families, were hunkering down attempting to remain safe amidst the bombings and violence overtaking their world. Front and center was this little girl, who was maybe seven or eight, and she was singing. At first it was really apparent just what she was singing that was making this video start to gain viral status, but as her voice started hitting certain notes and taking on a particular cadence, it quickly became evident. This little girl was belting out “Let it Go,” the earworm from Disney’s Frozen, but what made it hard to deduce at first was because she was belting it out in crystal clear Ukrainian.

As she continued to sing, the phone taping her did a slow scan around the bunker, and there you could see more people than you could truly fathom

in this small space, all with their phones out videotaping what was playing out in front of them. You got the sense that this was a blissful moment of normalcy in a world entirely shattered and torn apart by pain and fear and every person in that bunker wanted to hold onto that moment for posterity's sake, to have something to turn to when the world got cold and dark. To remember that when the world is hard, at least in this one little moment, for this one little girl, while many things could be bothering her, the cold wasn't one of them.

The underlying message of this video though felt like it went far beyond just this brief moment of respite and sweetness when the world was falling apart. Let it Go, after all, is a theme song for independence and empowerment. When the world was desperately trying to control and shape Elsa to be something they approved of, something they could handle and manage, she finally decided to claim her own sense of identity and power and declare that she was her own woman through and through and nothing was going to hold her down anymore. When you took into consideration these themes, these lyrics, they took on a different meaning when sung by a little girl in the middle of a bunker, in the middle of her country whose freedom was trying to be ripped out of their hands, when they are trying to be controlled and overtaken by powers bigger than them. For the adults in

this bunker, you got the sense that this was also a moment of empowerment for them, they weren't going to roll over and be who Putin expected them to be, but were going to be their own people, holding on to their freedom with every fiber of their being, and nothing was going to make them let that go.

In the midst of all of that though, there was one other image that kept glaring at me from this video, particularly in light of our gospel this morning. Here were all of these people, scared, terrorized, and powerless, and the only thing that was keeping them safe were the walls of this bunker. You had no idea how far down they were, how thick their walls were, how close to bombs falling they found themselves. All I kept thinking as I watched this video was, these walls were the closest equivalent they had to a mother hen's wings gathering them up and keeping them as safe as possible.

If I'm being honest, my main emotion when reading this gospel is that I feel bad for Jesus. He seems so frustrated and just sad as these events play out around him. A group of Pharisees approach Jesus with a warning, he needs to get away because Herod wants to kill him. It's a different tone than we're used to from the Pharisees, but in Luke, they are less Jesus' enemies and more his sparring partners. They engage in a lot of theological dialogue centered around their disagreements, which can sound antagonistic, but in Judaism, this kind of theological discourse is actually a deep sign of respect,

not angst. Jesus respects the Pharisees and vice versa in Luke, they just fight a little bit. So they're trying to protect him, and Jesus simultaneously vents and sighs. He calls Herod a fox and basically says his time for attacking Jesus will come, but he has work to do still so back off, and then he pleads towards Jerusalem with motherly love and pain. He calls towards Jerusalem like a parent to a child, a child who cannot get out of its own way.

Jerusalem the city that kills prophets and stones those whom God sends to rescue them. Jerusalem the city that has been entrusted by God into the people's hands and they just keep messing up and making it a city of violence, narcissism, and injustice. Jerusalem the city that Jesus just wants to save from itself with love and protection. Yet, deep down he knows, that there is nothing he can do...yet. God's beloved city, filled with God's belovedly flawed people must be left to its own devices until the time comes for Jesus to enter and literally save it and God's people from themselves.

It's heartbreaking when you think about it. Jesus looking at God's world, at his siblings, at God's beloved creation and seeing that no matter what, no matter what they claim to believe, sin just keeps everything and everyone tinged with a sense of brokenness and hopelessness. Jesus sees his people's pain, both the pain inflicted by the world around them and the pain that is self-inflicted, and he just wants to protect them. I mean the image he

uses is so unbelievably evocative. The way that hens protect their chicks isn't just by like shoving them behind them or keeping an eye on them. Hens literally gather their chicks up underneath their wings, and then tuck those wings around their chicks to the point that sometimes you can't even see them, or you can only see their lil beaks peeking out from the wings. It is all encompassing protection and love. Jesus wants to scoop God's people up, hold them close to him, and keep them safe. Like refugees seeking shelter in a bunker from the terror around them, Jesus wants to surround God's people with walls that will keep them safe and keep out the pain of the world around them that would seek to hurt them.

I think over the last couple of weeks a lot of us have had the question on our hearts and on our lips of just *how* the world could be like this? How could we be living in a world where we are so careless with the weapons of war, where land and power are more important than people? They are painful questions to contemplate, and yet, I find myself wondering, as our world keeps turning in ways that are so contrary to God's calling, just what God is feeling looking at creation, looking at us, God's beloved and cherished people? You wonder if the lament of Jesus in this gospel is still echoing, but with a slight adjustment. Humanity, humanity the people that kill each other and cancel those sent to you. How often have I desired to

gather you under my wings like a hen gathers her chicks and save you from yourselves. Yet, this time is yours...you have the tools...you have God's word... you have been saved with love...so now...what will you do?

Imagine how God feels looking at this world lovingly created where we have become some complicit, so blasé about the preciousness of other's lives. Where we will lament lives lost in another country, as we should, but can barely muster an ounce of regret and angst about the number of transgender people who are killed in this country? Where we will demand that others see us for who we are, and accept us without concession, and then we'll watch as states attempt to pass legislation where we aren't allowed to say gay because it might harm children, not giving one thought for the harm it will do to children who are struggling with their identity to be told they can't talk about it. Where we will come to church and listen to Jesus' commands about love, about grace, about not throwing stones, but the second we leave this building we are filled with anger, judgment, and criticism for those who are different from us in any way, shape, or form. Where we complain about the price of gas, without thinking about the things we blindly spend money on on a regular basis while some of our siblings can barely afford food, let alone a car to put gas in. Where our perspective is so skewed that we perpetually think that God is on our side, no matter how

many things we do in contradiction to God's calling and we just assume God must be just like us, because anything other than that is unfathomable. A God who calls us to account for our anti-gospel behavior is just too hard to contemplate, because it means we must change.

It is nothing short of a gift that we have a God who longs to hold us beneath parental wings and save us from ourselves, from our worst tendencies, from the pain we inflict on each other. Within the safe walls of our lives, we are sheltered by the wings of our God who constantly seeks to provide us with protection and care, shielding us from the slings and arrows of not only this world, but of our own hearts. It is a gift to appreciate, to value, to say thank you God for, to know that no matter what happens we have a safe shelter to hide in when the world gets too hard, when our hearts get too weary, yet we also must ask ourselves how we can change the things we need protection from. How can we bring about a world that no longer needs bunkers and weapons of war? That no longer is focused on scarcity of resources, but abundance for all? That values not just some lives, but every life, for exactly who it is, no matter what, no questions asked? How can we bring about a world that emboldens us out from the shelter of our Lord's wings to make a difference in the lives of our siblings, that emboldens us to spread our arms wider and say, here, with me, you are safe? **AMEN!!!**