

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever had your love rejected? Her name was Sandra Moody and I first met her in the third grade. I thought she was the most beautiful girl on earth. I can remember thinking, “When I stop hating girls, she is going to be the first one I stop hating!” I actually had a huge crush on her beginning about the sixth grade. She was one of my best friends. Her nickname for me was “flathead” because the back of my head is flat. I hated that nickname—but because I had a crush on her, I endured it. When I was in the seventh grade Sandra gave me her school picture and it was the only one I carried in my newly acquired wallet. I used to take her picture out and kiss it—but I was just her buddy, Flathead. In the eighth grade I finally summoned enough courage to ask her to be my girlfriend. She laughed and said, “Yuck, Flathead, you are like my brother! Besides I’m in love with Mark McCoy.” We continued to be friends, but my heart was good and broken for the first time. After high school, I lost touch with Sandra.

About ten years ago, I was preaching a revival at Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola, Florida. It was advertised in the paper, and one afternoon I got a message from the church secretary to call...Sandra Moody McCoy. She lived in Pensacola and I didn’t even know it. She told me she was going to come to the revival service that night. After the service, I was standing down front and I saw her at a distance, with her three kids and her husband, Mark McCoy. I just *knew* she was having a hard time restraining herself from running into my arms saying, “Oh, David, the biggest mistake of my life was not becoming your girlfriend in the eighth grade!” But instead, she said, “David! Wow, you’ve got gray hair to go with your flat head!” We laughed and had a short visit and I found myself thinking of that song by Garth Brooks, “I thank God for unanswered prayers!” I’m glad I married Cindy!

But, oh, the pain of rejected love! Some of you have had the same experience, perhaps many times. It hurts when someone rejects your love, whether you are 13, 22, 33 or 73 years old. In the passage today, I want you to see how Jesus’ love is often rejected. Let’s talk about Jesus, the rejected lover.

Before we read, let me review the context and setting. Jesus was on the way to Jerusalem to be crucified. (see 13:22) The opposition against him was growing stronger and more vocal. The common people loved him and heard Him gladly, but the religious crowd hated Him because He exposed their hypocrisy. Let’s pick up with Luke 13:31-35:

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.” He replied, “Go tell that fox, ‘I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.’ In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!”

Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

In these words you can almost feel the depth of love and compassion He had for His people. That’s the same kind of love He has for you today, so let’s learn three things about Jesus’ love.

1. JESUS IS A FEARLESS LOVER

The Pharisees warned Jesus that Herod was out to kill Him, so He had better leave town by sundown. He was no friend of the Pharisees, so this warning was probably a scare tactic intended to spook Jesus.

Herod Antipas was a powerful governor who had the authority to execute anyone he desired. A few months earlier he beheaded John the Baptist at the request of his cunning stepdaughter, who was also his niece. Herod had nightmares that Jesus was actually John come back from the dead.

Jesus’ reply is priceless. He makes a joke of Herod. He says, “You tell that fox...” That’s an example of Hebrew humor, but I noticed none of you laughed. Maybe you Texans just don’t appreciate good Hebrew humor. He was offering a caricature of Herod as a sneaky, cunning, predatory animal—actually pretty funny if you knew anything about Herod! He was more animal-like in his passions than human.

This response reveals Jesus’ courage. He is a fearless lover. He indicated He was going to keep on doing what He had been doing and Herod wouldn’t slow Him down. He had a job to do and He had a goal to accomplish. In verse 32 He said, “I WILL reach my goal.” His goal was to redeem sinful mankind—and He knew He would have to die as the sacrificial lamb to provide forgiveness. *Nothing* would cause Him to detour from the destination of the cross. He wasn’t afraid of Herod because He knew He already had a date with a death, and it wouldn’t be at the hands of Herod. Jesus didn’t die some martyr’s death over which He had no control. They didn’t execute Him; He willingly laid His life down. He makes that clear by what He said in John 10:17-18: “The reason my Father loves me is that *I lay down my life*—only to take it up again. *No one takes it from me*, but I lay it down of my own accord.” I have always been fascinated by that phrase from Revelation 13:8 which says Jesus was the Lamb of God who was “slain from the foundation of the earth.” The cross was not an afterthought of God. It was not “Plan B,” because Adam and Eve sinned. It was not the contingency plan—it was always God’s plan.

In a few days, Jesus was going to carry a literal cross from Pilate’s fort to a hill outside Jerusalem. But Jesus was already carrying that cross in His mind and heart. At the beginning of His ministry He knew He would die and rise again. He said, “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up again.” (John 2:19) That’s why He was a fearless lover.

Human nature always wants to “detour from the difficult” instead of staying the course. Human nature says, “Get out of that bad marriage” or “Don’t submit to that difficult boss.” But there is a cross for all who would follow Jesus, and we must be fearless in carrying it.

**Here’s the personal APPLICATION for each of us:
When I belong to God, I don’t have to fear any fox!**

Jesus laughed and said, “You tell that fox...” On the surface, it seems as if Herod was the old fox who was being laughed at, but on a different level, I think Jesus was also laughing at the fox of death, the death Herod had the power to inflict. Jesus laughed at death.

When you are carrying the cross of Jesus, you have already died to self. You can’t scare a dead man. When you’re carrying the cross, it’s a liberating experience because you don’t have to be afraid of anybody or anything.

I recall when the ship captain delivered the first missionaries to the wild New Hebrides Islands, he said, “I don’t know why you are going to those savages because they will kill you.” The missionary replied, “They can’t kill us because we have already died.” The Bible says, “Perfect love casts out all fear.” (1 John 4:18) That’s why Jesus wasn’t afraid, because He possessed a perfect love for us. And we don’t have to be afraid because of His perfect love for us. Jesus laughed in the face of the fear of death. When you are carrying the cross, you can laugh at any other threat, too.

I read an interesting story some time ago about the history of Atlanta, Georgia. In the 1950s the Ku Klux Klan staged an annual march down Auburn Street, which was the section of town where most of the African-Americans lived. The purpose of the march was to instill fear in the hearts of those black folks—and for years it worked. They hid or left town on the day of the march, afraid or humiliated by this display of hatred based solely on the color of one’s skin.

One year before the march, however, a pastor preached on “perfect love casts out all fear.” And he challenged his congregation to show that they weren’t afraid of the marchers. He told them not to return the hatred of the marchers, or to be violent, just show them they weren’t afraid. So, instead of some ugly confrontation the black folks decided to just watch the parade. When the Klan started parading by in their robes and hoods, the black folks lined Auburn Avenue and started laughing at them. Instead of being afraid, they were rolling on the sidewalks in laughter at the silly sight. That was the last year the Klan ever marched down Auburn Avenue.

I love the comment about the “Proverbs 31 woman.” (Proverbs 31:25) It says a godly woman is able to “laugh at the days to come.” When you are carrying the cross, you can face any threat of the future and laugh at it. That’s what Jesus did—He made a joke about Herod and his deathly threat. What are you afraid of today? Death? Financial ruin? Terrorist attack? Disease? When you truly belong to God there is *nothing* in this life that can rob you of your joy and your promise of eternal life. Some people go through this life whining and complaining and moaning and groaning that life isn’t fair. Hey, this life isn’t fair, but this life isn’t all there is! Turn to the person next to you and say, “This life isn’t fair—but God is good all the time. So get over it, and get under the cross!” Start living a life under the cross where you can laugh at the things that ought to scare you. Jesus is a fearless lover and what a lesson for us!

2. JESUS IS A PROTECTIVE LOVER

This passage could be called Animal Planet because Jesus makes references to two different animals. He compared Herod and death to a fox, and He compared Himself to a mother hen. Look at verse 34 again. He says, “Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone

those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” Can you hear the depth of passion and heartache in that cry? There are many pictures in the Bible that describe God’s nature and character: He is a rock, the door, a shepherd, the light...there are many others. God’s character is so multi-faceted that none of these images fully communicate the richness of His nature. Each one gives us a small insight into how He wants to relate to us. This is an unusual one, but have you ever thought of God as a mother hen?

Halfway down the Mount of Olives overlooking Jerusalem, there is a small chapel built by the Franciscan order called Dominus Flevit, Latin for “The Lord wept.” It’s called the “Chapel of Tears” and the building itself has a teardrop design. Inside there is a window overlooking the temple mount where the Muslim Dome of the Rock is now located. I like this window because it places the cross over Jerusalem. This is the site where scholars believe Jesus paused to weep over Jerusalem, which we will read about in Luke 19.

Inside this chapel is a beautiful mosaic that captures this image. You can see a hen with her wings outstretched with little chicks underneath. The Latin inscription around the mosaic is verse 34, and the last words “but you were not willing” are written in red. It’s as if Jesus is still standing over Jerusalem with His arms of love outstretched and the Jews and Palestinians are unwilling to accept His love. Jerusalem will never have peace until they acknowledge the Prince of Peace.

Now, I must admit I have never raised chickens, and maybe some of you have, so you may know more about chickens than I do. But you must remember I’m a Baptist preacher, I’ve been eating fried chicken for the past 30 years—so I’m somewhat of an expert! Preachers love chicken. In fact, someone once said a preacher’s belt is simply a leather fence around a chicken graveyard!

I heard about one unusual preacher who didn’t like chicken. He was doing a revival and eating in someone’s home every night. The first night, he was served chicken, as well as the second and third nights. All week long, that’s all he got. And he didn’t like chicken. On the last night, they brought out a big plate of chicken and asked him to say the blessing. By this time he was sick of chicken, so this is the blessing he prayed: “Lord, I’ve had it hot, I’ve had it cold; I’ve had it young; I’ve had it old; I’ve had it tender and I’ve had it tough; but thank you, Lord, I’ve had enough!”

But we can learn something about God by understanding a mother hen. Perhaps the greatest allegory ever written is *Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan. In it a man named Christian is on a journey and in one section he learns a lesson from a hen. This is what John Bunyan observed about a hen that can teach us something about God.

(1) A hen constantly calls her chicks

I have been around a chicken yard and heard them clucking, but I thought they were clucking just to hear themselves cluck. Bunyan said each hen has a distinctive cluck and clucks constantly so her chicks can find her. Her chicks recognize her call. Jesus is constantly calling us to Himself as well. He says, “Come unto me all of you who are weary and burdened and I will give you

rest.” (Matthew 11:28) If we are wise, we will recognize and respond to the call of Jesus. Next, **(2) A hen calls them to feed.** In every chicken yard there is a clearly established “pecking order.” The most dominant chickens get the first chance at food. As you can imagine, little chicks are pretty far down the pecking order. A good mother hen will find some food and then call her chicks and then allow them to eat before she eats herself. In the same way, Jesus is constantly calling us to Himself and to His Word. The Bible says the Word of God is like milk, meat, and honey. We are to feed on it every day. Finally, Bunyan observed that **(3) A hen shelters them from harm.** As I studied for this message I was amazed to learn just how protective a hen is of her chicks. If a chicken hawk flies near the chicken yard, the hen will squawk furiously to call her chicks to settle under her wings. As the hawk swoops down, the hen will face the hawk and spread her wings even wider. Since the hen is too heavy for the hawk to carry, the hawk soon leaves—what courage!

One man who grew up raising chickens in Canada relates an amazing story. One day his chicken coop caught fire. They finally extinguished the fire before too much damage occurred. As they searched through the rubble, they found a dead hen near her nest. The hen’s feathers were scorched from the smoke and fire. As he lifted the burned hen from the ashes, he was surprised to see movement below the mother hen. Four small chicks scurried out from under her outstretched wings chirping and cheeping. She could have escaped herself, but she chose to protect her young. There are some great lessons here. Jesus made a way to shelter us from eternal judgement—and He died in the process. There is a great promise given to us about this in Psalm 91:4. The Bible says, “He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge.” Of course God doesn’t really have feathers, He isn’t a chicken with literal wings. The point is God wants to shelter and protect you from harm. That leads us to our

Personal Application: The only safe place in the universe is under God’s love

Jesus weeps because the Jews didn’t seek shelter under His love. Are you hiding under the wings of God? Smart chicks stay close to the mother hen because there’s a lot of danger in the chicken yard. Some of you have wandered away from the protection and the love of God. Oh, God still loves, you, it’s just that you refuse to remain under His care. There is a very important verse in the little book of Jude that many people have missed. Jude only has one chapter and in verse 21 he writes: “Stay right at the center of God’s love...keeping your arms open and outstretched, ready for the mercy of our Master, Jesus Christ.” (Jude 21, *The Message*) This doesn’t mean you can make God stop loving you, and there is nothing you can do to make yourself any more or less lovable with God. His love is absolutely *unconditional*. This verse challenges us to remain in what I call “the Zone of Blessing.” When you are driving along and you enter a school zone, you should slow down. There’s usually a sign that says “leaving school zone” so you can resume the lawful speed limit. You are either in the zone or out of it. It would be wonderful if God would post some kind of sign that had the warning: **“YOU ARE NOW LEAVING THE ZONE OF GOD’S BLESSING. YOU ARE LEAVING THE CIRCLE OF GOD’S LOVE!”**

In a few weeks we will get to the Luke 15 where Jesus tells the story of a son who demanded his inheritance and then left home. The prodigal son left the zone of his father’s blessing, but His father never stopped loving him. He left the circle of his father’s affection. Whenever you disobey and rebel against God, He doesn’t stop loving you, but your disobedience causes you to

walk out of the zone of blessing. My dad always loved me, but there were times when I was a teenager that I rebelled and he couldn't really bless me the way he wanted; I left the zone by my stupid rebellion.

That's why we are told to “stay right in the center” of God's love. The Greek verb is the word *tareo*. It's a word that was used of a prisoner who was “locked in prison.” We should make sure we are locked into the center of God's love and then we should throw away the key! Like those little chicks Jesus spoke of, we should stay under the protective wings of God. We should be like a little child running to a parent with our arms outstretched and open—and get back into the zone of His blessing and grace. Some of you are Christians and God loves you, but you have left the shelter of His love. Today, you can come back to Him and get back into the center of His love. Finally, we see

3. JESUS IS A REJECTED LOVER

Verse 34 contains five of the saddest words in the Universe. Jesus said, “but you were not willing.” Jesus loves you so much He died for your sins. There is a heaven and a hell, and if a person lives their entire life rejecting His love, they will spend eternity in hell. But I suspect He will say to each person who goes to hell, “I wanted to protect you and shelter you like a hen protects her chicks...BUT YOU WERE NOT WILLING.”

Jesus was sent primarily to redeem Israel, so I can understand how His heart was broken because His Jewish brothers and sisters rejected Him. The Bible says, “He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.” (John 1:11)

Jesus also says something in this passage that has prophetic implications. In verse 35, Jesus says about Israel, “You will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” God isn't finished with the nation of Israel. Don't you think it's strange that a nation reborn in 1948, that is smaller than Vermont with a population less than the Metroplex is in the news every day? It's because Israel will play an important role in the end times. Basically, when Israel rejected Jesus it was as if they were blinded to the truth about Jesus. And to this day, most Israelites are blind to the truth about who Jesus is. We are now living in the age of Grace where God's message of salvation is being offered to the Gentiles. Paul writes in Romans 11:25: “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of Gentiles has come in.” If you are a little confused here, I encourage you to get my tapes on Romans 11 where I explain this in great detail. That word “hardening” means that they have put scales over their eyes so they cannot see and recognize Jesus. One day that will change. On the day Jesus returns at the Battle of Armageddon, He will stand on the Mount of Olives—perhaps at the very spot where He wept over Jerusalem. At that moment, an amazing thing will happen: the scales will fall off of the eyes of the Jews and they will see Jesus and recognize Him. They will cry out to Him and weep because they killed Him.

This is prophesied in Zechariah. I love to read this book when I'm in Israel, and it usually brings tears to my eyes as I contemplate God's marvelous plan: God says, “And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, (Zechariah wrote these words in 500 B.C. long before

crucifixion was even practiced!) and mourn for him as one mourns for an only child...if someone asks him, ‘What are these wounds in your hands?’ he will answer, ‘The wounds I as given at the house of my friend.’” (Zechariah 12:10; 13:6) Hallelujah! One day, Israel will accept their Messiah! Here’s the important

Personal Application: The result of rejecting Jesus’ love is desolation

When I was in the eighth grade, Sandra Moody rejected my love—and the result was only a minor broken heart. The consequences of rejected Jesus’ love are much more severe. In verse 35 Jesus said, “Your house is left unto you desolate.” When He said “house” He was speaking of both the beautiful Temple that sat like a crown jewel on top of Jerusalem as well as their national heritage. Residents of Jerusalem proudly called themselves “the house of David.” Jesus was saying their family background as well as their beautiful Temple would become desolate. And about 40 years later, the Roman General Titus totally destroyed Jerusalem and tore down the Temple—all because they rejected God’s offer of love. And the proud nation of Israel passed out of existence until just 54 years ago. And the Temple Mount is still desolate for the Jews.

This isn’t just true for Israel, however. Any person who rejects God’s love will also experience the same result: spiritual desolation. When I think of the word “desolate” I imagine a dry, barren desert where there is no shade and no water. I’ve known people, and perhaps you are one of them, who are experiencing spiritual desolation. There are no springs of living water bubbling up in their personalities. There is no fruit, no joy, no peace—only barrenness and desolation. Are you there?

CONCLUSION

The most amazing thing Jesus said in this passage is that you have the power to choose. Those last four words in verse 34 are also some of the most powerful words in the universe. He says to us, “I will love you and shelter you like a mother hen protects her chicks *if you are willing*.” You have the power to choose. When you choose to change the direction of your life that’s called repentance. Have you ever repented and accepted Jesus’ love?

Alfred Nobel was a Swedish Chemist who invented dynamite and other explosives in the 19th Century. One day he opened his paper and read his own obituary! It said,

Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite died yesterday. He devised a way for more people than ever before to be killed in war, and he died a very rich man.

He was shocked to read those words. Actually, it was Alfred’s older brother who had died and the newspaper made a mistake. But the obituary had a profound effect on Nobel. He didn’t want to be remembered as man who got rich by selling explosives. He changed his will to award money each year to people who promote peace. Today when you hear the name Nobel you don’t think of dynamite, you probably think of the Nobel prizes. Nobel later wrote, “Every man ought

to have the chance to correct his obituary in midstream and write a new one.” If you could read your obituary tomorrow, what would it say and what would you *want* it to say? A newspaper obituary only runs for a couple of days and then it’s forgotten, but your choice regarding Jesus Christ has eternal implications. You have the power to choose to accept God’s love and mercy and forgiveness and to rewrite your eternal obituary!

Today Jesus invites you to run under His wings of safety and warmth. Some of you are Christians who left the circle of His love. He never stopped loving you, but you have vacated that zone of blessing. Will you move back to a position of obedience so He can bless you? Others of you need to accept His love for the first time. Will you do that? Because if you choose *not* to receive His offer of love, for you He is *still* Jesus, the rejected lover.

OUTLINE

1. Jesus is a fearless lover

“The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life—only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” *John 10:17-18*

Application: When I belong to God, I don't have to fear any fox!

2. Jesus is a protective lover

A hen:

1. Constantly calls her chicks
2. Calls them to feed
3. Shelters them from harm

“He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge.” *Psalms 91:4*

Application: The only safe place in the universe is under God's love.

“Stay right at the center of God's love...keeping your arms open and outstretched, ready for the mercy of our Master; Jesus Christ.” (Jude 21, *The Message*)

3. Jesus is a rejected lover

“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.” *John 1:11*

Application: The result of rejecting Jesus' love is desolation.



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To put it in Texas terms, “You’re mighty welcome to use any and all of my ingredients; just make your own chili!”

For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes