

## **Foxes have holes**

Did you know that St. Mark's has a fox? We do! There is a little gray fox who lives in our woods and makes regular visits to the deck, the playground, and the edges of the building. I don't know if it is male or female...so I'll just say that Foxy doesn't seem to be very social. Doesn't show up when there are lots of people here and usually only when there's almost no one. But Foxy does seem to like what people leave behind, like food scraps.

I learned something interesting about the gray foxes who live here in Central Texas. They can climb trees! In fact, they sometimes live in them and jump from branch to branch when they are up there. Almost like big squirrels.

And there's another interesting thing about foxes and where they live - they are territorial. That means they stick to a pretty small geographic area to live and sleep and hunt for food. So in a way, we share a home with Foxy, St. Mark's.

But our home here is different from that of the fox - Foxy never really leaves home and we must.

When Jesus utters the words "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head," he is on a journey. Everyone on this journey with him has left home and isn't quite sure where they are going. And to the ones who want to join him he makes this cryptic remark. "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

That's an awfully confusing thing to say! And it sounds exhausting.

He also says that joining him immediately takes precedence over obligations to family and other commitments. These are not the types of things we expect from Jesus - until you remember that earlier in Luke's Gospel a 12-year-old Jesus teaches in the Temple without telling his parents. And his parents, who have started the journey back to Galilee, don't miss him for a couple of days.

And Jesus spent his entire ministry wandering. So maybe he wasn't a homebody.

We've come to experience church as a place of comfort, a kind of home. In many ways it is. We come here with our families, we make an extended family with the others who come here. We eat together, do work together, talk about important issues together. We are nourished here. We are safe to be ourselves here.

It's home.

And yet...it's not. Church may refresh us and care for us. And every time we come here church sends our back out again. We are not meant to stay here.

Remembering this is as exhausting as having nowhere to lay my head. Nowhere to lay our heads. And, friends, it feels right now like that's what we all really need. A place to lay our heads. An existential nap.

As people of faith we've been called out of our churches to respond to racial hatred, gun violence, and violence targeting LGBTQ folks.

We are pushed out of our comfort zones to help the people in our community who are finding it increasingly hard to find shelter and food for themselves and their children.

We are called forward on the journey to honor the dignity of God's creation as it is consumed by fires and littered with our consumption.

Just as we try to take a rest, we march out of this place to make sure the full humanity of women is honored and protected. That they - that we - don't become collateral damage in larger power struggles.

It's a lot of work. It seems to be a never-ending journey.

It sounds strange to hear Jesus say, "Let the dead bury their dead." But in a moment like this I can understand the urgency. At this point in his ministry, Jesus is already facing Jerusalem. He took a circuitous route, to be sure, but the wandering was defined by his destination: Jerusalem, trial, and crucifixion.

Facing this destination, Jesus lets his followers know what the journey requires: homelessness and a willingness to put the urgency of the coming of God's kingdom above other obligations (even sacred ones).

We don't know how the people in this gospel story responded to that invitation but we do know that it is our invitation, as well. Our loyalties to family and community are not bad, they are sacred. And yet we are called throughout our lives as Christians to place the call of the kingdom first.

When we are baptized, we agree to join Jesus on this journey. It requires a lot of us - everything, really. It tests our loyalties. Jesus' life and ministry, his death and resurrection all flowed from one source: God's love for the whole world, for all of humanity. In our baptism, we offer ourselves to be part of this journey. To be part of this love.

Sometimes, as Christians, we start to act like foxes. We like to stick to our territory and prowl around the edges of what we know. Like a Central Texas gray fox, we might even climb high and have a view of what lies beyond our home.

But we are not foxes. Our territory is not a square mile in which we live, sleep, and hunt for food. We are human beings and we are Christians. We have no territory but the kingdom.

Every Sunday we gather here, in a specific place, to be with our extended family of faith, to pray and eat and be companions to one another. And at the end of our time together we say - together - something like this:

“...assist us to do all such good works as thou has prepared of us to walk in...”

Or

“Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us the strength and courage to love and serve you...”

Or

“Send us out to do the work you have given us to do, to love and serve you as faithful witnesses of Christ our Lord.”

And as a final reminder we end our worship by saying:

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Whenever we gather, we do so only to be sent back out on the journey. It is exhausting. But remember, Jesus' journey doesn't end with trial and crucifixion. It goes from there to resurrection. We are on this hard journey because the destination really is better than where we and our sisters and brothers are right now. We are on this hard journey at the invitation of a God who loves us and wants everyone to know the fullness of that love. That is a journey worth losing sleep over.

Jesus invites us to leave our resting places and take part in this. The world needs to hear what we have to say, there is no time to wait.

Foxes have holes - or trees. Birds of the air have nests.  
And our place is out in the world proclaiming the kingdom of God.

Amen.