

Animals of the Bible (10) The Hen



Last week, the week before Mothering Sunday, I wrote of how a loving mother's prayer was granted by the Lord Jesus. This week we see Jesus expressing the mother love of God Himself.

Both Matthew (chapter 23) and Luke (chapter 14) record how Jesus lamented over the Holy City, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets, you stone the messengers God has sent you! How many times have I wanted to put my arms round all your people, just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you would not let me"! Jesus foresaw the destruction that was to befall Jerusalem, and He must have longed for its people to turn to Him and accept the salvation He alone could give them.

Hens with their chicks, scratching in the dust around houses and barns, would have been a familiar sight to people in those days. When I was a boy, we kept chickens in a run at the bottom of the garden, as did many of our neighbours. I loved to watch a hen with her chicks around her, and recall how, at the slightest hint of danger, the mother would cluck and the chicks would come running to hide under her wings.

I read once of two men who were walking through the remains of a barn that had been destroyed by fire. One of them kicked casually at a small black mound among the ashes, and

three little chicks ran out from under it. It was the body of a hen that had died protecting her young from the flames.

Our Lord compared His love for the people of Jerusalem to that of a hen calling her chicks to herself and sheltering them protectively with her own body. That love was to take Him, not long after, to a cross outside the city where He laid down His life for us all.

A prayer:

O God, we have known and believed the love that you have for us. May we, by dwelling in love, dwell in you, and you in us. Teach us, O heavenly Father, the love wherewith you have loved us; fashion us, O blessed Lord, after your own example of love; shed abroad, O Holy Spirit of love, the love of God and man in our hearts. For your name's sake. AMEN

(Henry Alford, 1810 -71)

- Rev John Barnett

Image: CackleHatchery.com.