WEEKLY SERMON

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VISION 2026
HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES

THE DIOCESE OF BLACKBURN
THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IN LANCASHIRE

…go and tell that fox - a reflection on Luke 13:31-35

Sometimes when I read a passage of scripture there is something that jumps off the page at me.

Perhaps it is something that I do not remember reading, or because my understanding of the context has improved I now comprehend something that I previously missed.

Today, it wasn't something very profound. It wasn't a deep theological truth that had previously remained unknown to me.

It was Jesus calling Herod a fox. As I read the passage, I was completely taken aback by this. I know Jesus was not the meek and mild person that is often portrayed by films and pictures, but calling someone, especially the king, 'a fox' just seemed to be a little out of the blue.

Jesus knew how to use names. He understood the power that affixing an identifying label can give. Referring to Herod as a "fox," Jesus speaks to his character and nature.

Herod is dangerous and predatory. He cannot be trusted, and it is right to be wary of his strength and the power he wields. Yet, Jesus is unafraid. Jesus knows who Herod is and confronts him from that vantage point.

Jesus is also aware of who he is himself. Herod does not hold power over Jesus or the mission he is committed to finishing. Neither does the city of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was a major and important city that was known by many different names, including the 'City of God', 'City of Judah', and the 'Holy City.'

It was the centre of the Jewish faith and the political capital of the region. It was here that people would come from all over the known world for major religious festivals and pilgrimages.

Even today the city holds a very similar status, it is a symbol that represents so much more than a geographical location. Although the city of Jerusalem was held in high esteem, it had a history that fell short of its reputation. Jesus himself refers to it as: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!"

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Despite this history and the fear that it would be in Jerusalem that Jesus would end his earthly life, Jesus was going there to finish the work. He would continue to cast out demons and perform cures as he says, but he would also go on to confront systems of oppression, declare those who had been abandoned or ridiculed by society to be beloved; he would set the oppressed free, favour the poor and heal the broken.

Jesus knew the power that was attached to his name. Jesus, the Name above all names, can be trusted and depended upon.

He knew that we would see him in those who came after him and were continuing his work (not just living off his reputation). He knew that people would then say: 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'

Amen.

Calum Crombie, Anglican Chaplain, HMP Wymott

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