

## Spiritual Lessons from Nature's World Part III

Well it has been a while since we have had a trip to the zoo but I would like for us to visit again for a couple of Sundays and then later on we will try and visit again. Today's visit involves some interesting creatures that have been given us by a God who enjoys great variety. Today lets begin with



### The Fox

Song Of Solomon 2:15 said *Catch all the foxes, those little foxes, before they ruin the vineyard of love, for the grapevines are blossoming!*

One of the fun things about living in rural America is the chance to see wildlife at various times. One night, a number of years ago, shortly after we got here, we couldn't sleep so we got up and this is what we saw in the church light as it shone over at our house. They were so cute and fun to watch. So with foxes in mind, I want to think about some of them and the wording of the passage in Song of Solomon

There are 21 species of foxes worldwide except for Antarctica. They share territory with wolves and eagles but they do avoid coyotes. They come in a variety of colors of red, gray, or silver. We often think of them catching rabbits but to the contrary, they do not take rabbits except for those who are sick or injured.

Instead they feed mainly on mice, earthworms, birds, squirrels, or carrion as well as berries and vegetables. In so doing, they help immensely to control the rodent population. Foxes catch their food by listening with their keen hearing and then pouncing on it.

Foxes den in hills or under trees in dens that are called earth's. Foxes are vary adaptable and can become accustomed to city life and may even make friends with your cat or dog and thereby are able help themselves to that extra food although they don't eat that much and you must also be careful about rabies.

So foxes are quite interesting and the passage here talks about the little foxes getting the grapes. This is symbolic language and it means the little things in life that ruin the crop of joy and victory in the Chr. Life. First there is the

#### A. Little fox of procrastination

Ecclesiastes 9:10 says what? *Whatever you do, do well. For when you go to the grave, there will be no work or planning or knowledge or wisdom.*

Procrastination robs us of the joy and relief of completion of projects that face us so lets or forget that tomorrow is always the busiest day of the year.

#### B. Little fox of bitterness

Hebrews 12:15 says this to us, *See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled;* Bitterness robs us of joy, friends, of opportunity to succeed. **Thought:** Bitterness is self-cannibalism and robs us of life itself.

#### C. Little fox of criticism

Not only does it rob you of your joy, and sometimes of friends, but it often robs another person of their will to keep on trying. Criticism is a nasty little fox that will ruin the vineyard. **Don't forget**, any fool can criticize and most do

#### D. Little fox of fear

II Timothy 1:7 says what? *For God has not given us a spirit of fear or timidity, but of power and love and discipline.* **Question:** How many times in your life has this little fox stolen some of your victories and joy?

E. The little foxes of doubt, indifference, selfishness, stubbornness, worry and I am sure you can think of others.

So lets be careful to work at keeping these little foxes out of the vineyard of our lives and ministries. If we do, we can enjoy much greater victories and happiness.



## The Mockingbird

The northern mockingbird is a medium-sized songbird measuring about 9 in. long and weighing about 2 oz. with longish legs and tail and a slightly curved bill. It is a non-migrating, year-round resident of all areas of the United States, Cuba, the Bahamas, and Mexico.

The mockingbird is omnivorous. About half its diet consists of arthropods, including beetles, ants, bees, wasps, and grasshoppers, but it will also eat earthworms and small lizards. In the fall or whenever available the mockingbird enjoys eating fruits, both wild and cultivated.

Of all North American birds, the Mockingbird is by far, the most famed for its vocal imitations. Besides its own extremely happy song, the mockingbird's repertoire has been known to include over 40 different sounds which it can mimic. The song is a mixture of original and copied phrases, each repeated several times. It will imitate other species' songs and calls, squeaky gates, pianos, sirens, barking dogs, etc.

Another resource says that Northern Mockingbirds can sing up to 200 songs. These include the songs of other birds, insect and amphibian sounds, and even the occasional mechanical noise. This resource, says an experienced individual may sing anywhere from 50 to 200 different song types, and their repertoire increases with age and both males and females sing.

Well from the name and from the background of the bird we find that the one thing about it that stands out is the fact that it mimics other birds and sounds. It is from this unique feature that I want to try and draw some thoughts for us to consider as to spiritual implications.

I think of the mockingbirds in the church in general. There will always be people who try to mimic and fit in even though they have never really asked Christ to be their Saviour. They are also referred to as tares.

Matthew 13:25-30 says *But that night as everyone slept, his enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat. When the crop began to grow and produce grain, the weeds also grew. The farmer's servants came and told him, 'Sir, the field where you planted that good seed is full of weeds!' "'An enemy has done it!' the farmer exclaimed. "'Shall we pull out the weeds?' they asked. "He replied, 'No, you'll hurt the wheat if you do. Let both grow together until the*

*harvest. Then I will tell the harvesters to sort out the weeds and burn them and to put the wheat in the barn."*

Another word for tares, is the word weeds. This word tares is used only in this parable and it means a weed called the "bearded darnel" This weed actually looks very much like wheat until it is ripe but actually eating it, could cause dizziness and nausea.

So, like the mocking bird, the tare mimics the wheat, just as non Christians mimic the real believers by trying to be spiritual w/o receiving Christ. But lets look for a few minutes at what we should be mimicking if we as true believers are to learn some lessons from the mocking bird.

**Question:** If a person is really a believer, what should they be mimicking if they are to go on to victory and have a successful Chr. life? I would suggest that we consider mimicking

#### A. The fruit of the spirit in our walk as believers

Just think of the progress we would make in our walk if we would mimic or display for others to see, exhibits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. That would send a beautiful song into a dark world as well as into a sometimes dark and troubled church

#### B. Then we might be much better off if we would mimic the great heroes of the faith. in Hebrews 11

1. Noah - lets mimic his example of working in faith when things don't make sense. He built a boat when it had been really dry and sometimes God may have us working when things don't make sense, so lets mimic Noah and keep at the task.

2. Abraham - Lets mimic his unwavering faith in following God. *Gen. 12:1-4 The LORD said to Abram, "Leave your land, your family, and your father's household for the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation and will bless you. I will make your name respected, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, those who curse you I will curse; all the families of earth will be blessed because of you."* Abram left just as the LORD told him, and Lot went with him. Now Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. **Question:** What is our faith like, or will be like at 75 years of age? Will we be mimicking Abraham or sitting tight on a safe perch some where

3. Or what about mimicking **Moses** as an obedient leader and servant as he led the Israelites out of Egypt.

4. Or there is the **good Samaritan** who was a willing helper to the hopeless and downtrodden.

5. Or what about **Job**? Can we mimic his tenacious trust in God when his life was falling apart all around him?

But not only can we, or should we, mimic or publicly display the fruit of the Spirit and the great heroes of the faith, But what about mimicking

C. Working with the mission heart of Jesus for the lost in our world

Jesus came for us while we were yet lost, and after being found, we need to mimic the one who came to rescue us

P.F. Bresee reminds us concerning a lost world, "We are debtors to every man to give him the gospel in the same measure in which we have received it" **Or as** Dave Davidson challenges us "If you found a cure for cancer, wouldn't it be inconceivable to hide it from the rest of mankind? How much more inconceivable to keep silent the cure from the eternal wages of death."

Well, just as the mockingbird mimics various sounds, we as believers, have some good examples that we can mimic if we are up to the challenge. Acting like Jesus and the great heroes of the faith. The best way to mimic them in our world today is to mimic The fruit of the Spirit.

**Question:** Will we be good mockingbirds for Jesus?



### **The Ostrich**

The ostrich is a unique and interesting bird. It is a member of the **ratite** family. That word ratite means flightless bird, thus Ostriches cannot fly. And as you well know, the Ostrich is the largest living bird in the world.

When fully grown an ostrich has one of the most advanced immune systems known to mankind. **The spiritual lesson here is,** We need to be immune to disappointment, discouragement, criticism if we are to prosper as believers

This bird is indigenous to Africa, where it has been raised commercially for more than 100 years and it grows to a height of seven to eight feet and weighs 250-400 pounds when fully mature. Handling ostriches can be dangerous to the bird and handler. A mature ostrich is capable of delivering a kick of up to 500 psi.

It is often been said that Ostriches bury their head in the sand but in reality, Ostriches do not bury their head in the sand. The meaning of this however is, that they do not want to deal with their enemies or unpleasant situations, but you see there are people who are guilty of this supposed ostrich trait of hiding from situations.

However, that process of sticking their heads in the sand can cause some real problems. Lets think of some situations that people would rather hide from, if they can, or should hide from if they were smart.

#### I. What people **should hide from** if they were smart

##### A. Basically they should hide from sin

Proverbs 15:11 says *Even the depths of Death and Destruction are known by the LORD. How much more does he know the human heart!*

Because we don't hide our heads from sin, sin gets into our eyes, heads and hearts and the Lord knows this. In this case, we would be much better off hiding our heads in the sand like the supposed ostrich, if that is what it takes us to avoid sin.

#### II. What people **often hide from** that hurts them in the end.

##### A. We often hide our head from problems

This is dangerous because problems have a terrible habit of growing if they are not dealt with, and we can't deal with them if we won't look at them.

##### B. Secondly, we often hide our heads from commitment

We want someone else to do it because we don't have time. We sometimes hide our heads in the sand and pretend that if I don't see a need, I won't have to commit to helping. But if we won't commit, we won't get the blessing that commitment to a cause can often bring about.

##### C. Sometimes we hide our heads from the need for spiritual growth in our lives.

The reason is that spiritual growth calls for time, energy, money etc. and if I don't see the need, then I won't have to deal with it.

So these are some things that will hurt our growth and lives in general if we hide our heads from them. But let's think a moment about another scenario that can help us. The ostrich figuratively hides its head in the sand, as we have just looked at, but think about its long neck and the potential good if it is used correctly. Remember, this bird can grow to be 7-8 ft. tall. Think of the advantage it would have in looking for its enemy. It is like a big periscope such as used in a submarine. If we walk erectly and are willing to stick our necks out, what should we be looking for.

A. We should keep our eyes peeled for the enemy.

One of the ostrich's enemies is the lion and what is our enemy? A lion!! I Peter 5:8 tell us *Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Someone said it like this; Avoid Satan as a lion, dread him as a serpent, and fear him as an angel of light.*

B. We should keep our eyes peeled for opportunities

1. To grow spiritually

Ephesians 4:15,16 says *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

In II Peter 3:18 we find this, *but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

So instead of burying our heads in the sand we need to hold our head up high and be on the lookout for opportunities to grow spiritually.

2. We should keep our eyes peeled for opportunities to grow in service.

**Remember**, Nobody can help everybody, but everybody can help someone. But sadly, most people seem to want to hide their heads in the sand when, if you stand tall like the ostrich, you might see several situations you can help in and grow in Christ at the same time.

Well the Ostrich may not bury its head in the sand but the principle is the same and sadly many humans try it as well. So let's be careful to avoid burying our heads but instead let's stand tall like the ostrich. Hold our heads up high and be watchful for opportunities to grow and serve.

Then like the Ostrich, when it comes to sin let's run away from it as fast as you can like the Ostrich does from a lion Remember the ostrich can run at 45 miles per hour and They can

maintain this speed for at least 30 minutes. Lets try and do that when the enemy comes after us.

In closing: When it comes to your forever be sure no to let the little fox of procrastination keep you from finding eternal; life thorough the only one who can give it to you, Jesus. To find that gift all you need to do is read, believe and act on the following instead of sticking your head on the sand and thinking that somehow death and eternity will somehow miss you. Here is the key to that Good News,

Realize you are a sinner Romans 3:23

Understand that the payday for sin is death or eternal conscious separation from God. Romans 6:23a

Know that there is a way of escape for you. Romans 6:23b and John 1:12

Desire to escape and pray this or a similar prayer.

"Dear God, I know I am a sinner. I am truly sorry for my sins, and I confess them all to You [name them). Lord Jesus, forgive all my sins and come into my heart as my Saviour and Lord. I receive You right now. Help me from this time forward to live for You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. In Jesus' name. Amen."

On the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ I became a Christian by inviting Jesus Christ into my life to forgive my sin.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

If you have further questions or have chosen to do this, be sure to let us know so we can help you, pray for you and encourage you in your new life.

You can reach us at [lapeerchurch@gmail.com](mailto:lapeerchurch@gmail.com) Subject line: (Salvation)