

FOX, FLY & FROG FOLLIES
Song of Songs 2:15, Ecclesiastes 10:1 & Exodus 8:9

INTRODUCTION:

During November, we have been looking at little creatures that God has used to teach us some important lessons. We've looked at beasts like ants, coney, locusts and lizards. We've looked at bugs and birds. Last week we looked at fungi like yeast.

This week, we are going to look at a few more creatures, all of whom we meet in the pages of the Old Testament and all of whom can teach us something about how important the daily decisions are.

I. THE FOX FOLLIES (Song of Songs 2:15)

You don't hear a lot of sermons that quote the Song of Songs (or the Song of Solomon as some translations call it). That is because it isn't the easiest book in the Bible to understand or to apply. There is some disagreement about the message of this book. It is about a king and a maiden who are in love; everybody agrees on that. But some people believe that it is an allegory that represents Jesus and the Church even though it was written 1500 years before the birth of either.

I tend to take the book more literally as being about a real king and a real maiden who are in love. They are preparing to get married and this is a record of some of the highlights of their courtship and their relationship.

Within this ode to romance there is a terrific little verse: chapter 2, verse 15. The king says these words to his fiancée:

¹⁵ *Catch for us the foxes,
the little foxes
that ruin the vineyards,
our vineyards that are in bloom.*

Vines and vineyards were very important to the Jewish people. Most families had at least a few vines and some people made the majority of their living off of grapevines.

Surprisingly, foxes were pests that could devastate grape vines. While we tend to think of foxes raiding chicken houses and eating the hens, in fact, foxes are omnivores: they eat rodents, rabbits and other small animals; they eat fish, reptiles and eggs; and they eat fruit, berries and grasses.

In a vineyard, adult foxes would often strip the grapes from the vines and consume large quantities of the produce. And while that was bad, the damage caused by the young was often even worse. While the adults were foraging for fruit from the vines, the little foxes that could not reach

the grapes would often dig at the base of the vine and eat the tender roots of the plants. The big foxes would devour the fruit but the little foxes would destroy the vines.

The king told his beloved to catch the little foxes that would otherwise ruin their vineyard.

In any relationship there are little differences, small disagreements and minor disputes. They need not pose a threat to the people involved. They need not, but they can. If we allow these little foxes to gnaw at us, they can devastate a relationship, destroy a marriage, devour a home. The king is wise to say, *“Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.”*

What kind of little foxes can destroy our homes, even while they are in the full bloom of love?

- **Neglect** may be the number one predator of healthy homes. We enjoy our family and each member of the family. Everything seems to be going smoothly enough...until we begin to take one another for granted. Then we neglect to speak the loving words, confer the loving touches, do the loving deeds, give the loving tokens that all express our affection and our appreciation for the others in our home. Neglect is one of the little foxes that will kill our homes.
- **Broken promises** can kill relationships. If we don't follow-through on what we say we are going to do, over time, our family learns. And what they learn eats at the roots of our relationships.
- **Favoritism** – Repeatedly in the Bible, we read the stories of families that were torn apart because parents pitted one child against the others and played favorites. Isaac loved his son Esau more than he loved the twin, Jacob. But Isaac's wife, Rebekah preferred Jacob and did not care for her other son, Esau. Jacob, for his part, had twelve sons and showed blatant favoritism to one of the youngest: a boy named Joseph. Every time you read about favoritism in the Bible, you read about family conflict. Favoritism is another of the little foxes that will destroy a family.
- **Harshness** – Many a child has had his spirit broken by an overly harsh parent who was severe in that child's correction and discipline. Many a wife or husband has given up on the marriage because of a harsh spouse who was controlling and simply mean. Harshness is a little fox that will wreck a home.
- **Preoccupation** – Do you remember the folk song by Harry Chapin: Cat's In The Cradle? The song tells the tale of a young man who wanted to do things with his dad. His dad kept putting him off and promising that they would get together some day. And the loving, trusting son kept saying, “Someday I'm going to be like you, dad. You know I'm going to be like you.” By the end of the song, the boy is a

man and the dad is an old man. Now the dad is the one who wants to spend time with his son but the son has indeed grown up to be just like him: preoccupied with his own life and not occupied at all with his dad's. Preoccupation is a little fox that can destroy relationships.

- **Projection** – Someone has defined a sweater as a garment a child must wear when his mother feels cold. Rather than allowing the children to develop their own personalities and live their own lives, parents sometimes project their preferences, their taste and their dreams onto their kids. And this can be one of the little foxes that harm the home.
- **Anger** – The world is full of angry people who do not process their anger properly but who take it out on those closest to them. Enough of us have observed enough of that for us to know that anger can be one of the little foxes in the vineyard of our relationships.
- **Myopia** is the technical term for nearsightedness. Those of us who are nearsighted can see the things close to us but we can't focus on those things further away. Many people are myopic in their relationships. They think only about themselves: their wants, their needs and their preferences and they give barely a care about what others want, need or prefer. Such nearsightedness is another of the little foxes that will ruin our homes.

Capture the little foxes. Control them and remove them for the sake of your home.

II. THE FLY FOLLIES (Ecclesiastes 10:1)

Mark McGwire played 15 seasons of major league baseball and was an all-star 12 of those 15 years. In 1998, McGwire hit a major league record 70 home runs in a single season. Mark McGwire was an outstanding baseball player but he may never get into the Hall of Fame because his entire career is tainted by the suspicion that he may have taken performance enhancing drugs.

McGwire was an outstanding baseball player but he may not be remembered for that. Richard Nixon did many things right as a president but he is forever known for Watergate. Bill Clinton will be forever linked with Monica Lewinski; Kanye West isn't known so much for being a rap artist as he is for having been unspeakably rude to Taylor Swift during the 2009 MTV Awards. All of these people are illustrations of the truth recorded in Ecclesiastes 10:1 -

*As dead flies give perfume a bad smell,
so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.*

When we lived on a farm in North central Missouri, we had salves that we kept in the barn for use on cattle. More than once, we inadvertently left the lid off of a can of salve and a few days later found several dead flies in

the salve. Quite honestly, I don't recall what the salve smelled like. But in Solomon's description in Ecclesiastes 10:1, Solomon says that dead flies in perfumed ointment makes the stuff stink. His point is that a little bit of foolishness outweighs a lifetime of wisdom and honor.

I remember a minister who had done an outstanding job of ministry among a few churches for several years. He was highly respected and had even been asked to be the president of a Bible college because of his mature stability. Then one day, when he was in his sixties, he left his wife and ran off with another man to live in a homosexual relationship. His legacy? Not decades of faithful ministry but rather an immoral decision near the end of his life. His legacy? Not being a loving husband and gentle father for many, many years but rather his betrayal of his wife and children.

*As dead flies give perfume a bad smell,
so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.*

Watch your life and witness. Guard your heart. Maintain your integrity and preserve your legacy. Watch out for the folly of the flies that can make your whole life stink.

III. THE FROG FOLLIES (Exodus 8:9-11)

In Exodus chapters 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11, Moses records the various plagues that God visited on the Egyptian Pharaoh to try to soften his heart so he would allow the Israelites to leave lives of slavery and go to the land that God had promised them.

One of the plagues that God had sent upon Egypt was the plague of frogs. They were EVERYWHERE! Frogs in the beds; frogs in the cupboards; frogs in the tub and the toilet; frogs in the sugar, frogs in the flour, frogs in everything. This plague was so pervasive and so disgusting that the Pharaoh finally relented and told Moses to take his people and get them out of Egypt. The text records:

⁹ *Moses said to Pharaoh, "I leave to you the honor of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile."*

¹⁰ *"Tomorrow," Pharaoh said.*

Moses replied, "It will be as you say, so that you may know there is no one like the LORD our God. ¹¹ The frogs will leave you and your houses, your officials and your people; they will remain only in the Nile."

Neil Kinley tells me that years ago, a young man preached a sermon for the preacher-boy contest at the Kiamichi Mountain Men's Clinic and he based it on this text. His title was "One More Night With the Frogs". I don't know if that young preacher-boy was the first to preach that title or not but I heard both Verneil Garren and Howard Newlin preach a sermon with that title.

The thrust of all of these sermons is the same. Here is a man who could have been delivered from the plague immediately. *“Moses said to Pharaoh, ‘I leave to you the honor of setting the time for me to pray for you and your officials and your people that you and your houses may be rid of the frogs, except for those that remain in the Nile.’”* And the Pharaoh said, “Tomorrow.”

Tomorrow?!? Tomorrow?!? Why would the Pharaoh want to spend one more night with the frogs when they could have been removed right now? I don't know. You tell me why someone who knows that the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse him from all iniquity, would decide to spend one more week, one more night, even one more moment stained with the taint of sin. Tell me why anyone who needs to ask another for his forgiveness would spend one more day, one more hour, one more minute waiting to approach that person and seek his pardon. What would cause anybody to decide to spend one more night with the frogs, one more night in his guilt, one more night in his sin?

CONCLUSION:

We can learn a lot about foolishness from some of God's humble creatures. We can learn that little predators can destroy our homes, little acts of foolishness can ruin our reputations and little delays can prevent our deliverance.

One winter in the far north of the United States, a mighty eagle was seen to land on a carcass that was floating down a river. As the bird feasted on the flesh of the dead animal, the river was taking the eagle and the dead carcass steadily closer to a great falls. The eagle seemed to pay no attention to the fact that danger was getting closer by the second. Apparently, the eagle knew that with one powerful flap of its great wings, it could rise off the carcass and fly to safety. As the carcass finally reached the edge of the falls, the eagle spread its great wings and tried to fly away. However, because of the bitter cold temperature and all the water that surrounded the carcass, the eagle's talons had frozen fast to the dead animal. Try as it might, it could not lift itself free. In just a moment, both the dead animal and the screaming eagle plunged over the falls and the eagle fell to its death, crushed by tons of falling water!

Friends, delay is dangerous! Come as you are. And come now.