

Sunday Sermon

1/14/24

Series: Little Foxes

Passage: SoS 5:10-16

Title: The Little Fox of Dishonor

Good morning, Church! It is so good to be back together again! Please turn in your bibles this morning to Song of Solomon chapter 5. We are continuing this week in our series “Little Foxes” – a series about relationships. From our most intimate relationship (the marriage) to our most casual, God wants our relationships to be strong, healthy, and a reflection of him. Song of Solomon 2:15 says, **“Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards.”**

Remember, we learned last week that Song of Solomon is a book about relationship, specifically the hot, happenin’, desire or eros filled, love relationship between a man and a woman. And to express that, it is written as poetry. When it says, “Foxes” that is not meant to be taken literally. God is not making an authoritative statement that, as an animal, foxes are “of the devil” and God’s people should usher them into extinction. No, God’s Word is using it as an example, a picture, of a concept about relationships that we need to understand.

The fox was a devastating enemy of the vineyard owner in Israel - stealing fruit, eating the new growth, chewing the roots of the vine - and in doing so bringing great harm or even destruction to the vineyard. The vineyard owner had to be vigilant. There was an unending warfare between the vineyard owner and the foxes in Bible times. The field owners didn’t catch them to feed them, or take them as pets, or even to release them. **They caught the fox to kill it, lest the fox come back to bring its devastation again.**

The same warfare is going on in our relationships. The fox is a representation of the LITTLE THINGS that we allow to creep in and roam freely in our relationships. LITTLE THINGS that over time if left unchecked can bring about great trouble and devastation – destroying community, breaking down relationship, causing division. Listen: God wants our relationships, our marriages, our churches to be strong. He wants his people to be a people of unity. Of one heart, mind, and spirit. One with one another. One as he - Father, Son, and Spirit - is One with himself. How do we do that? 1) We need to be attached to him, know him, know his love. 2) We need to catch the foxes.

Last week, **God showed us our first little fox – the little fox of discord.** In relationship conflict happens. It’s a by-product of relationship. The danger is when conflict happens, when we turn away from the other, when there is no heart or intentionality to reconcile that relationship, when it is never fully mended, we allow the little fox of discord to roam. How’s that working out?

I heard it said this week, **“There is something that is a whole lot harder than having a good marriage - having a lousy one.”** Beloved, catch and kill the foxes. Winter is upon us. We all know what winter snows can be like. Not being diligent about the foxes in our

relationships is like waiting for 3 feet of snow to fall before you start shoveling. It's much easier to shovel multiple times at 4 inches than one time after it's too late. God says, "Be diligent. Catch the foxes." And if you need a reminder of how to catch and kill the little fox of discord, go back and listen to last week's sermon.

That said, let's learn about our **second little fox: the little fox of dishonor. (Pray)**

Heb. 13:18 says, ***"Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way."***

In Gal. 6, in a passage where Paul is speaking about relationship, he writes this, ***"Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows from his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows from the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. So let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith."*** – Gal. 6:7-10

When it comes to our relationships with one another – it doesn't matter if we are talking about an intimate relationship with a spouse or a casual relationship with a co-worker – what we sow or bring into the relationship is important.

At the heart of so much brokenness in our relationships is the little fox of dishonor – an issue rooted in how we view the other person, how we value the other person, or hold the other person in our heart. Scripture says that ***God has crowned every person with glory and honor (Ps. 8:4-5)*** and yet so often we don't view or treat one another that way. And so the little fox roams.

In our passage this morning the couple leaves no room for the little fox of dishonor. Listen to what the heart of the woman has to say about her husband. It begins what the others speaking, asking a question about her husband. They say, ***"What is your beloved..."*** stop. We've already gone too far. Doesn't that strike anyone as interesting? It should say, "Who is your beloved" or "why is your beloved" but it doesn't. They say, ***"What is your beloved more than another beloved?"*** The Hebrew actually reads like this, ***"What kind of beloved is your beloved?"*** What kind of person is he? How do you feel about him in your heart? What place/value does he hold in your mind and heart? That's what they are asking.

Now listen to the heart of the woman. **[Read SoS 5:10-16]**

You know...as a man...when I looked at myself in the mirror this morning, this, what she said, is basically, pretty similar to how I would have described myself.

Of course I'm joking. But here's what we see. No doubt she has a high opinion of her husband's appearance. But her honor actually goes quite a bit deeper than that. What we learn is that she has high honor for her husband. Look at the first two verses: ***"My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand."*** That word "distinguished" is

the word “**daw-gal.**” It means “**to set up to a place of prominence, to flaunt.**” In her mind and heart, the woman has set her husband in a place of honor. Her goal, her desire, maybe her choice, was to flaunt him publicly, before others, to build him up. Sometimes I’ll come home and Becky will say to me, “I was bragging about you today.” Setting up. Honor.

An interesting use of this word is actually in battle, when Roman soldiers went into battle they raised or set up a standard, a flag. It wasn’t just sign for the men to follow into battle or to designate what group they were in. These banners were sacred symbols which meant something to the soldiers. If the standard was lost in battle, the entire unit would be in disgrace, dishonor, serious trouble. It was precious.

Listen: when it came to her relationship, she made it her heart to raise up her husband. Why? Because he was precious in her sight. Verse 11 – “**His head is like gold, pure gold.**” That’s a value statement. She says, “I ascribe value to him.”

Listen: this has very little to do with his actions. This is mostly a reflection of her heart toward him – to honor him. Listen to her mindset, her commitment, her attitude - verse 16, “**This is my beloved and this is my friend.**”

Question: What attitude of heart, what commitment to raise up, are we bringing to our relationships? And in case you are wondering, the guy returns to the woman the same honor, the same value, the same positive mindset, and the same commitment to raising up. 6:4 – You are beautiful...my love...Awesome as an army...(6:9) my perfect one...the only one. Perhaps my favorite statement of honor from the guy comes out of chapter 1:9 where he says, “**I compare you, my love, to a mare among Pharaoh’s chariots.**”

Pharaoh’s chariots were pulled by stallions, male horses. Now, what he means by his statement is that she is so beautiful that she distracts all the other guys. But in that we see **his heart - to protect, to guard her, because she is valuable.** But I want to focus on the first part of that verse: “I compare you” or literally the guy is saying, “To me, you are like...” Question: how would you finish that sentence? Because this is where we meet our little fox.

When it comes to relationships, we can understand dishonor as “**bringing or casting shame or disgrace on another. To lower or disrespect.**”

When Becky and I are counseling couples, and this a principle we put into our relationship very early on, we tell them, “**No public shaming of one another.**”

If you have a problem, you can address it later. By all means talk it out. Fight it out. Creating a culture of honor does not mean that you never speak truth, nor does it mean that you affirm or support everything the other person is doing or saying.

Proverbs 13:18, “**Poverty and shame come to him who ignores instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is honored.**” Proverbs also says, “**Faithful are the wounds of a friend.**” – Proverbs 27:6. Bringing honor to someone does not mean ignoring fault. Conflict, wounding, reproof can make us better, can be for our good and growth, *if* it is done in right way, in a healthy way. But if it is not, beware of the fox. Because the wound often lasts long

after the offense. And if not allowed to heal before being wounded again the wound only grows.

Dishonor is devastating to a relationship because it is not aimed at building up, but tearing down. Dishonor is not concerned with making a person better. It is not aimed at loving or protecting or valuing the other person. Its goal is only one thing: Bringing shame.

Listen to this quote by professor and writer, Brené (Like: Renee) Brown, **“Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.”**

It’s the messaging from another that you don’t measure up to their expectations, that you’re not good enough, that you’re an idiot, that you fall short, that you are annoying, that your opinion doesn’t matter, that you are second class. That brings pain, not results. That destroys relationship, not nurtures it. Like a fox, it steals our fruit. It gnaws on our roots. And hear it long enough we begin to believe it. To receive it as truth. To internalize it. And it causes the vineyard to wither.

Beloved, kill the fox. Sow honor into your relationships. Set one another up as highly valued in your eyes and heart – Christians, neighbors, co-worker, and especially your spouse. You say, “You don’t understand. What if **they** aren’t worthy of honor?”

Were we?

Heb. 12:2 tells us that **“Jesus...for the joy set before him** (that was us, bringing us into a relationship with the Father, that was the joy) **endured the cross, scorning its shame.”** Another beautiful facet of the Gospel is that, in Christ’s death on the cross, not only did Jesus take our sin on himself and exchange it with his righteousness, but in doing so he also took our shame and moved us into a place of honor. Beloved, under his grace, how could we treat one another any different - especially in our marriages which are supposed to be the greatest earthly example of God’s love, shown in the way we love one another?

Yet sadly the truth, when it comes to many marriages is that, **“The relationship in which we need grace the most is often the one in which it is least expressed.”** – Tim Kimmel

Beloved, kill the fox. God’s word shows us how to kill the fox. **“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor.”** – Rom. 12:9-10



LITTLE FOXES

Song of Solomon 2:15

“Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyards.”

- Song of Solomon 2:15



**LITTLE
FOXES**

Little Foxes:

1) The Little Fox of Discord



LITTLE
FOXES

“There is something that is a whole lot harder than having a good marriage - having a lousy one.”

- Tim Kimmel



**LITTLE
FOXES**

Little Foxes:

- 1) The Little Fox of Discord
- 2) The Little Fox of Dishonor

Heb. 13:18 - ***“Pray for us. We are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to live honorably in every way.”***



LITTLE
FOXES

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows from his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows from the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life...”



LITTLE
FOXES

“So let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

– Gal. 6:7-10



LITTLE
FOXES

“What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the angels and crowned him with glory and honor.”

- Ps. 8:4-5



**LITTLE
FOXES**

“What is you beloved more than another beloved, O most beautiful among women? What is your beloved more than another beloved, that you so charge us?”

- Song of Solomon 5:9



**LITTLE
FOXES**

“My beloved is radiant and ruddy, distinguished among ten thousand.”

- Song of Solomon 5:10



**LITTLE
FOXES**



“His head is like gold, pure gold.”

- Song of Solomon 5:11



LITTLE
FOXES

“This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.”

- Song of Solomon 5:16



**LITTLE
FOXES**

“You are beautiful...”

“My love...”

“Awesome as an army...”

“My perfect one...”

“The only one...”

- Song of Solomon 6:4,9



LITTLE
FOXES

***“I compare you, my love, to a mare among
Pharaoh’s chariots.”***

- Song of Solomon 1:9



**LITTLE
FOXES**

Definition of Dishonor:

**“To bring or cast shame or disgrace on another.
To lower or disrespect.”**



LITTLE
FOXES

“Poverty and shame come to him who ignores instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is honored.”

- Proverbs 13:18

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend.”

- Proverbs 27:6.



LITTLE
FOXES

“Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love and belonging.”

- Brené Brown



**LITTLE
FOXES**

“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame...”

- Heb. 12:2



LITTLE
FOXES

**“The relationship in which we need grace
the most is often the one in which it is
least expressed.”**

– Tim Kimmel



**LITTLE
FOXES**

“Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil, hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly love. Outdo one another in showing honor.”

– Rom. 12:9-10



LITTLE
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