

Sunday Sermon

1/21/24

Series: Little Foxes

Passage: SoS 7:10-13

Title: The Little Fox of Neglect

Good morning, church! Please turn in your bibles to Song of Solomon chapter 7. We will be in verses 10-13 and continuing in our series “Little Foxes.” I trust that this series has been both rich and challenging to you thus far, as it has been for me. If you’ve missed the first two weeks of the series, quick recap, this is a series about relationships. God desires our relationships to be strong and healthy – our marriages, our churches, and how we live in relationship with one another. And while the content of Song of Solomon focuses on the most intimate relationship, the marriage relationship, the principles of this series certainly also relate to all our relationships.

Song of Solomon 2:15, **“Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that spoil the vineyard.”** This is the theme verse for our series. Foxes were just little animals, but they brought devastation to the vineyard. In the same way, there are little foxes running around in our relationships which, when allowed to roam, bring great devastation to those relationships. And in this, God give us his wisdom, “Catch the foxes.” From our most intimate relationship (our marriage) to our most casual, we are called to be diligent in the work of not allowing the foxes that would bring devastation to run free. But to instead, as they come, catch them, and beyond that to – do what, church? – to kill them, lest they come back to wreak havoc again.

Two weeks ago, God showed us our first little fox - the little fox of discord. In relationship, conflict happens. The danger is that when conflict happens, when we turn away from one another, there is no heart or intentionality to reconcile that relationship again. We naturally want to harbor discord against the other person. God desires us to live at peace with one another. Rom. 12:18, **“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”** That word peaceably means “to make peace” or “to cultivate peace.” Peace doesn’t come by accident. It needs to be intentionally cultivated, but it can’t be cultivated if the little fox of discord is running free – gnawing at the roots of the relationship and stealing its fruit. **Beloved, kill the fox!** Make no room for discord. If there is discord, sit down and figure out what’s at the root. Listen. Forgive. Let the other person know: I am for you. For your good. For unity. I am committed to this relationship. Work toward reconciliation. Worship the Lord by catching and killing the fox.

Last week, God showed us our second little fox – the little fox of dishonor. At the root of so much brokenness in our relationships is the little fox of dishonor – an issue rooted in the place/value another person holds 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. So the little fox roams. God says, **“Don’t be deceived, whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”** – Gal. 6:7. **Beloved, kill the fox!** Create a culture of honor in your

relationships, especially within the marriage. Have it in your heart to set up, to build up, to value and protect the heart of the other person. Worship the Lord by catching and killing the fox.

You want a hot, happening, lump in the throat, sweaty palms, pounding heart, can't wait to get with you, love filled marriage? Get on this program. God knows what he's doing. You want strong, healthy, working relationships in your life? Get on this program. God knows what he's doing.

And if you need help, get help. There's no shame in that. It will make a miraculous difference, if you are committed to doing it God's way.

I'm convinced that killing just these two foxes alone will completely transform our relationships, But we are just getting started. Those are just two of the foxes, we still have three more to go! So if you are ready to put the third fox in our sights this morning say, "Go."

Our third little fox: the little fox of neglect. But before we go, let's pray. (Pray)

Prov. 24:30 – *"I passed by the field of a sluggard, by the vineyard of a man lacking sense, and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down. Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty (lack, deficiency, shortage) will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man."*

It doesn't take long to see the effects of neglect on something. A few years ago, one of neighbors had a heart attack in his driveway. Just boom. Died. Right there. As you can imagine, it was devastating for the family. This church was very kind and generous in our support of them. But shortly after the death, the family decided to move out, and the house wasn't sold right away. For months it stood there, neglected. Now those of you who have seen this know, that when a home is lived in, sure it needs maintenance, but that house can be lived in a long time, hundreds of years when properly maintained. When a house is abandoned, neglected, how long does it take to begin breaking down? It's not years. It's months. Go by that same house 6 months later and there is a marked difference in that house.

The same is true of our relationships. Neglect isn't a big thing. But if that little fox is allowed to roam, it doesn't take long for the relationship begin to crumble.

It's far too normal to hear a woman lament, "My husband doesn't do bad things. There's no abuse, no infidelity. He just ignores me." Or a man to get to the place of "Whenever we are in a room together, our conversations always seem to end up in a fight, so it's just easier not to talk."

I was talking to a friend of mine this week, who has done a fair bit of counseling. He was sharing with me a story of a time a wife was talking about the relational dynamics between

herself and her husband. And in that she said, “My husband and I just took a 5-hour long car ride, and he didn’t say one word to me the entire time.” Neglect.

In our passage this morning, again the husband and the wife give us the blueprint for catching and killing this little fox.

Song of Solomon 7:10 - ***“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.”***

Now this is a refrain that we hear several times throughout the book, and each time it is used it changes given the issue at hand. Perhaps you remember from the little fox of discord when the woman says, ***“I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.”*** – Song of Solomon 6:3. Killing the little fox of discord requires a heart of mutual possession, commitment to one another, we’re in this together, we will work this out.

Here in 7:10 it’s, ***“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.”***

Listen: If you are taking notes, write this down. It’s very simple: **Neglect can only be killed by pursuit.** That word desire is a fascinating word in the Hebrew: tesh-oo-kah. It’s translated rightly as desire, longing or craving. But its root comes from the word “sh-oo-k” which carries in it two ideas. 1) to run or stretch out after (you see it in the movies all the time this “wait!” – to stretch out, long for, pursue from the heart), but there’s a second facet to this word, the idea of 2) abundance. ***“I am my beloved’s and his “tesh-oo-kah” – his heart stretches out after me in abundance.”*** He pursues me. He invests in me – his time, himself. He takes the time to woo me, to date me, to capture my heart again and again.

Hear a couple of quotes by John Eldredge. John has been years in the study of relationships and the inner hearts of the man and woman. He says this of the woman’s heart, ***“A woman wants to be romanced. She wants to be an essential part of a great adventure; she wants a beauty to unveil. This is what little girls play at, and those are the movies women love and the stories that they love.”***

Likewise, he says this of the man’s heart, ***“Men want a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to rescue. That is what is written on their hearts. This is what little boys play at. That is what men’s movies are about. You just see it. It is undeniable.”***

And I would say that these descriptions of our heart’s desires are generally true. Women want to be chased, and guys want to chase. The trouble is, once we say “I do” the chase often stops. The prey is captured. The dance ends. We wrongly think, “I no longer need to pursue that which I’ve already caught.” But wisdom says, “Catch them again.” There’s this old worship song *Your Love is Extravagant* and in that song there is a line, “Lord, capture my heart again.” Isn’t that what God does? When, as we go through life, there are times when we encounter him anew. When he shows up in such a way that it captures our hearts, and we say, “Oh yeah, there’s my first love. I remember.” Pursuit.

If we go back to our verse in Proverbs, that word “sluggard” comes from a root that means: “To lean idly, or to slack in responsibility.” “Lacking sense” is a reference to the inner person

– the heart, mind, soul, conscience - and that there's a gap there, a void, a lack of understanding. The field was neglected. The vineyard overgrown. The wall broken down. There was a lack of understanding about what his lack of care was doing. He fell asleep on the job.

Beloved, is that true of your relationships? Is that true of your relationship with your kids? Most importantly, is it true of your relationship with your spouse?

It's like a car tire. Even the best tire leaks over time. On Becky's Kia, one of her tires constantly leaks. When it gets low enough that little indicator on the dashboard goes on. Low tire. So what do we do? We take it to the air pump and fill it up with air, and the light goes off. Couple weeks/months goes by. Guess what comes on again? The low pressure light. Tire needs air again. Now I'm getting really tired of seeing that light.

Question: What would happen if I just ignored it? If I neglected putting air in the tire?

The truth is, nothing would happen, at least not right away. But over time, that tire would wear down. It would shorten its life. Maybe at some point it would go completely flat, or even worse, it would have a catastrophic failure while I'm driving somewhere. How do I prevent that? Pump up the tire.

Look again at our couple. Now these next few verses, there's no question about what they are about. They are about intimate, eros, passionate love making. Listen: Godly lovemaking. Verse 11: ***“Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge in the villages; let us go out early to the vineyards and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love.”*** (everybody say, “Ay oh!”)

“The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.”

You want hot, happenin', sweaty palms, pounding heart, lump in the throat, can't wait to get with you love? Kill the little fox of neglect. Put air in the tire. Keep pursuing your spouse. You say, “I don't know how to do that.” Good thing we have God's Word to guide us. In these verses he has given us a four-step blueprint.

Step 1: Invitation – Verse 11, “Come., my beloved.” Come with me. I want to spend time with you. Invitation

Step 2: Seclusion – Still verse 11, “Let us go.” Parties are great. Friends are great. That's not what this is. This is dating. This is face to face time. This is me and you. They went into a field. They stayed overnight outside the city. Seclusion.

Step 3: Intentionality – There was a plan. We're gonna go here. We are going to do this. We're going to see what blooms. I think where couples often go wrong on the dating front is that there's no intentionality. We think, “Well we haven't done something in a while. Might as well go to dinner.” And then you sit there, familiar environment, in the mundane, hardly talk. then you go home and wonder why there's no spark. Listen, if you were dating and did that, you'd be like. “I'm dumping him. That's so lame.” This couple had an adventure. We're going to go adult camping in this field. And then we're going to wake up and see the sunrise.

Invitation, seclusion, intentionality all lead to...

step 4: Connection. Verse 12: “there I will give you my love.” Verse 13 – “you can sample the choice fruit I have waiting for you.” This isn’t just about physical intimacy. That is a celebration, a by-product. This is about connection with one another.

You say, “What if I don’t have the time for that?” Um, make it. Don’t neglect your field. Don’t allow the little fox to roam. But, in that, know that not all pursuit has to be a big thing. There are little ways to pump up the tire as well.

Two stories from this past week:

My wife sent me a text on Thursday – “Hi. I love you.” Here I am working on my sermon. She doesn’t know the topic, that the sermon’s all about the little fox of neglect. She’s just thinking about our relationship - that we both had early morning meetings that day - that her new business presents a new dynamic and sometimes a heavier lift for our family - that we didn’t get any facetime with one another over coffee. And she thinks, “I’m going to make an investment. And shoots off a text.” You know what that is? It’s killing the little fox of neglect. So that I can say, “I am my beloved’s, and her desire is for me.” A simple thing. Huge dividends.

And to apply this beyond the marriage context, I know we can’t possibly sow into every relationship we have in the same way and with the same time that we should be investing in our spouses, but the concept is transferrable. Do the people around you know that you see them? That you care about them? Do they feel pursued, appreciated, or invested in on an appropriate level? Jesus couldn’t do that deeply with everybody. He had his one (John), his three, his twelve, the 72. But every one of them would have felt connected and cared for by him.

Here's the second story from this week: This one came from my daughter, Sarah. Obviously, a completely different relationship than me and my wife. Her birthday is coming up this week. This Wednesday my youngest will be 7 years old. Can you believe that? Anyway, on Tuesday night we were talking about her birthday being 8 days away, and she was drawing out a card to give to her friend at school so that they could be excited together that her birthday was only a few days away. A few minutes later Sarah walks up to me with a card that says, “6 days until my birthday.” I said, “Sarah, what is this?” She said, “I made it for you, so that when your birthday is 6 days away you can give it to someone. Now, my birthday is in November, but she wanted to care for me by making sure I had someone excited with me about my birthday. A little thing from a child’s heart that crushes the head of the fox of neglect.

And beloved, that is the love that God shows to us. In Matthew 25, Jesus calls himself our bridegroom. A groom who laid down himself, even to the point of death, in pursuit of his bride, you and me. And in that he extends his invitation, his desire, to each of us, “Come. Let’s dance you and I. Let me give you the life and the relationship that you long for.” Would you respond to his pursuit this morning and give him your heart?



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

Little Foxes:

1) The Little Fox of Discord

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

- Rom. 12:18



LITTLE
FOXES

Little Foxes:

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



LITTLE
FOXES

Little Foxes:

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

“What is man?... You have crowned him with glory and honor.”

- Ps. 8:4-5

“Don’t be deceived, whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”

- Gal. 6:7


LITTLE
FOXES

Little Foxes:

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



LITTLE
FOXES

“I passed by the field of a sluggard, by the vineyard of a man lacking sense, and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down...”



LITTLE
FOXES

“Then I saw and considered it; I looked and received instruction. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.”

- Prov. 24:30-34



LITTLE
FOXES

“I am my beloved’s, and his desire is for me.”

- Song of Solomon 7:10



**LITTLE
FOXES**

Truth:

Neglect can only be killed by pursuit.



LITTLE
FOXES

“I am my beloved’s, and his “teshookaw” stretches out after me in abundance.”

- Song of Solomon 7:10



**LITTLE
FOXES**

“A woman wants to be romanced. She wants to be an essential part of a great adventure; she wants a beauty to unveil. This is what little girls play at, and those are the movies women love and the stories that they love.”

- John Eldredge



**LITTLE
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“Men want a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to rescue. That is what is written on their hearts. This is what little boys play at. That is what men’s movies are about. You just see it. It is undeniable.”

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LITTLE
FOXES

“I passed by the field of a sluggard, by the vineyard of a man lacking sense, and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; the ground was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down.”

- Prov. 24:30-31



LITTLE
FOXES

“Come, my beloved, let us go out into the fields and lodge in the villages; let us go out early to the vineyards and see whether the vines have budded, whether the grape blossoms have opened and the pomegranates are in bloom. There I will give you my love.

The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and beside our doors are all choice fruits, new as well as old, which I have laid up for you, O my beloved.”

- Song of Solomon 7:11-13


**LITTLE
FOXES**

Catching the Fox of Neglect: Four Steps

Step 1: Invitation

Step 2: Seclusion

Step 3: Intentionality

Step 4: Connection



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