

## THE “MOTHERLY” PICTURES OF GOD: A HEN—AND AN EAGLE!

Preaching on certain Holiday’s—like Mother’s Day and Father’s Day—has some unique challenges.

--**First**, there is no “Mother’s Day” (or Father’s Day) “event” *in the Bible* like there is Christmas or Easter!

--A **second** challenge is that the **men** (on Mother’s Day)—and the **women** (on Father’s Day)—can mentally “check-out” and think within themselves, “This doesn’t apply to me, so I don’t need to listen!”

--A **third** challenge—especially when considering **our congregation**—is that we don’t have a lot of adults here in the “child-training” years. So instead of actively raising **children**, most of us are watching **our** children raise **their** children—which, of course, are our **grand**-children!

--And yet a **fourth** challenge is this: not all “Mother’s Days” are “happy!”

--For one family among us, this is their **first** Mother’s Day without their mother!

--For **a mother in Tomah**, it will not be “happy” because this coming Saturday is the burial for her 14-year-old son that she lost **nine** days ago!

--For two teens **here in Necedah**—an 18-year-old boy and his 15-year-old sister—it will not be “happy” because they will be burying their mother **tomorrow!**

--And for a **mother and her two young children**—also from Necedah—it will certainly not be “happy” because her husband recently **took his own life!**

So now you have an idea of what **kind of thoughts go through my mind** as I prayerfully consider the message that God would have me bring! This week, I felt led to dig into what the Bible says about the “motherly” characteristics of God. We know about God’s “fatherly” traits because He calls Himself that often! But we often don’t think about the “motherly” **side** of God!

**Two disclaimers** as we get started here this morning. **First**, I am not suggesting we switch to using “The Silent Voices Bible” where the gender of each character is swapped! In that “Bible,” John 3:16 says: “For God so loved the world, that **she** gave **her** one and only **Daughter**, that whoever believes in **her** should not perish, but have eternal life.” Not only that—in this so-called Bible—“King David is Queen Davina, and the prophet Samuel is now Samantha.” This isn’t just insanity—it’s **blasphemy**—at least in my opinion!

The **second** disclaimer—and one we probably don’t think about often enough—is this: God is **a spirit**—and does not possess a **physical** body! That means He doesn’t possess the **physical characteristics** of a male or female—so He is technically **neither one!**

But since we—and our world—**are physical**, God describes Himself with **human characteristics** so we can better understand Him. **God the Son** certainly came to earth **as a man**—and referred to the One who sent Him as **His Father!**

However, as mentioned last week, women are **not inferior** to men because **both** are made in the image of God! Genesis 1:27 “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; **male and female** created He them.” So I said all of that **to again say this**: There are some characteristics that we usually think of as “motherly” that are also used of God! And—as you already know from the title of the message on your outline—two pictures God uses to describe these characteristics are that of a hen—and an eagle!

First, let’s consider...**1. The protecting nature of a hen**

Take your Bibles and turn to Matthew 23. If you were to sum up Matthew 23, it would be something like: “Jesus rebuking the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees.” Seven times Jesus says, “woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” He also calls them “fools”—and “blind.” In vs 33, Jesus calls them “serpents”—and “a generation of vipers!”

But Jesus had a heart for the people of Jerusalem—and longed for them to come to Him! Notice what it says in verse 37. The word “hen” is used only twice in the Bible—here and in Luke 13:34 where Jesus says basically the same thing. A “hen,” of course, is a **female** chicken—as opposed to a **male** chicken which is called a **what?** A rooster! **How often** does a rooster gather chicks under **his** wings?

I raised a lot of chickens when I was growing up and don't ever recall seeing a **rooster** gathering chicks under his wings! I'm not saying it doesn't happen; I'm just saying **I've never witnessed it!** On the flip side, **I saw hens** gathering their chicks under their wings too many times to count!

#### A. The protective nature of a hen

Most of us—to include the children—know that a hen gathers her chicks under her wings to **protect** them.

--If it's **cold**, being under her wings will **warm** them.

--If it's **windy**, being under her wings will keep them from **blowing away!**

--If it's **raining**, being under her wings will keep **them dry!**

--If she senses **danger**, she will cluck loudly—the signal for them to get under **her wings!**

--And if a **predator comes**—regardless of the size—she will **not leave her chicks!** She will peck...and bite...and flap her wings, willing to **give up her very life** trying to protect her chicks!

--In a nutshell then, chicks learn they can be **comforted**—and **protected**—under the wings of their mother!

Does God have wings? Of course not! But being under God's wings is a picture the Bible uses to remind us of...

#### B. The protective nature of God

Take your Bibles and turn now to the book of Psalms where we have "wings" mentioned—in connection with God—at least **six** times! We're going to look at just a couple of them.

Turn to Psalm 17:8 "Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,"

--I had us turn here because of the reference to **hiding under** the shadow of God's wings, but I don't want us to miss the significance of "**the apple of the eye.**" According to Hebrew scholars, the "apple of the eye" is the **pupil**: one of the most **precious**—and **protected**—parts of our body!

--**Zechariah 2:8** on your outline also shows the **preciousness and tenderness** that is conveyed in the phrase "apple of the eye." "For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath He sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: **for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.**"

--God's children are the apple of God's eye! **And**—in the words of Jeremiah Burroughs— "**All** the saints of God are dear to God at **all** times..." (Treasury of David, Vol 1, pg 253).

--Let that sink in! If you are a child of God, you are **dear** to Him...and **loved** by Him...and **precious** to Him...and **special** to Him! And that is why **He wants you to come** under the shadow of His wings!

Next, turn to Psalm 57:1 "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast."

--We **need mercy**, don't we? Why? Because we **are sinful**—and God is holy!

--The context here, though, is that David is fleeing from Saul so the "mercy" he desires is the sparing of his life!

--Do we have **physical** enemies chasing us? **Most** of us here **do not!**

--But **Satan**—as a roaring lion—seeks to **devour us**—and we have **thoughts that often trouble us** and lead us away from trusting God. On top of that, we have calamities—we have hardships and struggles and trials that come into our lives—that we desire to be delivered from!

--**What** should we do when that happens? Just **as the chicks flee** to their mother for protection, **flee to God!** Go to Him as your place of **refuge**—and **trust in Him!**

Before we go on to the eagle, I want to share a few thoughts on... C. The practical applications for parenting

--How can parents apply these truths in raising their children?

**1) Know and do you part in protecting your children.** What does that mean—and what will that look like?

--Please know that I'm not talking about **wrapping your children** in bubble-wrap so they never get hurt!

--FB has some funny reels about **mothers who raise boys**. One lady put it like this: "Being a mom of boys basically means something is always being **climbed, jumped off, or body-slammed!**" I would add—"And something is always being **thrown and/or broken!**" The underlying theme of these videos seems to be this: the best way to teach a small boy not to jump on the couch is letting him fall off of it a couple of times!

--The protection I'm talking about, though, is **spiritual**—not physical.

--Parents need to take seriously their role in **protecting the hearts and minds** of their children.  
--Be careful who they **hang out** with—and whose **house they stay** at overnight.  
--Monitor the kind of **music** they listen to...and the kind of **movies** they watch...and **the apps** that they have on their phones.  
--I know from experience it is easier to be **overly permissive** than it is to be **wisely protective**, but God gives us **principles in His Word**—like the book of Proverbs—to **guide us** in our parenting. And because He gave them to us, we need to **learn** what He says—and **put into practice** what He says!

Not only do we need to do our part, we need to...

## 2) Trust God to do His part!

**Psalm 127:1** “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.”

--**A house** doesn't build itself—human labor is involved—but we need God's help and wisdom in building it! God—as the Rock—needs to be the **foundation** of our lives—and we need to use **His blueprint and His materials** if we want His blessing on what we are building!

--**The city** needs to have a vigilant watchman, but God is the ultimate keeper! We can't be **everywhere at once** to protect our children—but God can! We can't go night after night **without sleep**—but God can! And sadly, someday death will take **you** from them—but God will be **with them** even when you aren't!

Now take your Bibles and turn to Deuteronomy 32. In the way of background, the book of Deuteronomy is a recap of the history of the nation of Israel after they left Egypt—but before they entered the Promised Land. --In vs 9, we read that God's portion—His inheritance—that which He took **to** Himself **for** Himself is Jacob—meaning the nation of Israel.

--In vs 10, we read of God finding His people...and leading them...and instructing them...and caring for them “as the apple of His eye”—meaning **a precious, special people**.

--Now vs 11. At first glance, the verse is fairly easy to understand. We have the picture of a **mother eagle**—taking care of **her young that are yet in the nest**—as an illustration of how **God cared for the fledgling nation** of Israel. There are **some challenges**, however, as we consider the verse. **One** is that there are differences of opinion as to how the verse should be **translated**. The **second** challenge is this: **how far** do we take the picture of God comparing Himself to an eagle? And yet a **third** is this: Since we are **not baby eagles**—or the nation of Israel—to what extent can we apply these truths to ourselves?

With those cautions in mind, let's consider now... **2. The providing—and preparing—nature of an eagle**

### A. The providing nature of an eagle

--Does **verse 11** speak specifically about an eagle providing for its young? **No!** Technically, **it doesn't!**

--But we do know from vs 10 that God cared for His people in the howling wilderness.

--And we do know—according to verse 13—that God made them to “eat the increase of the field.”

--And we know from verse 14 that they ate well: butter, milk, lambs, rams, goats, wheat, and grapes!

--We also know—going back to the **picture of the eagle**—that the eagle is **more actively involved** in feeding their young than a hen is! In fact, I would argue that baby chicks **don't need to be taught** by their mothers how to scratch and pick. **Why?** Because they do it naturally! And the proof is that you can bring baby chicks home and put them in a pen with food, water, and a heat lamp and they will do just fine!

--But that **doesn't work** for eaglets! Their food—flesh from fish or a dead animal—is brought to them by both the mother and father eagle. The parents pick off small pieces and put them in the eaglets' mouths—and **they would not survive** if the parent eagles failed to do that!

But as we study and think about vs 11, the picture is not about the **providing** nature of the eagle. Instead, the focus seems to be on... **B. The preparing nature of an eagle**

What is the mother eagle preparing the eaglets to do? **Fly—and feed themselves!**

--Vs 11 – “As an eagle stirreth up her nest...” The word that “stirreth” comes from has two different meanings.

It can mean “rouse and awaken” like, “Hey, eaglets, time to wake up! I brought you your breakfast!” But it can also mean “stirring up the nest” so that it is **no longer comfortable!** **Why** would an eagle do that? Because if the nest **stays comfortable too long**, the eaglets won’t ever want to leave it!

--Back to the verse: “fluttereth over her young....” In an on-line article entitled “How Do Eagles Teach Their Babies to Fly?”, the author states that one of the early stages of learning to fly involves “wing flapping” where the eaglets **vigorously flap their wings** but remain in the nest. This, of course, strengthens their wing muscles.<sup>1</sup> How do they learn how to “wing flap?” By watching their mother **flutter her wings** over them!

--“spreadeth abroad her wings...” When does the eagle **spread abroad** her wings? When she is **flying**, right? The eaglets watch their mother come and go. As they get older—and inch out closer to the edge of the nest—they pay more attention to how she dives...and soars...and rides the air currents.

--Next, the verse says, she “taketh them, beareth them on her wings:” Does this mean that eagles teach their young to fly by giving them rides on their back? **Maybe**—but maybe **not!** We must keep in mind that the primary lesson is **not God teaching us how mother eagles teach** their eaglets to fly!

--Instead, God is using **figurative language** to show His love and care for the nation of Israel. And we know God is using figurative language because **He does not have wings**—and **honey can’t be sucked** out of a rock like it says in verse 13!

--And we see in vs 12 that God—and God alone—was the One who led His people through the wilderness and watched over them just as an eagle watches over her young!

--But we also know this: their conquering of the Promised Land would require them to **fight**—and defeat—**literal, physical enemies!**

Lastly, let’s consider... C. Some practical applications for parenting

So what are some practical applications—for parenting—that can be learned from this description of God as a mother eagle? I’m sure there are more, but I want us to consider **three**.

**1) Just as eaglets learn from the mother eagle, your children are learning from you!** Not exactly a news flash, is it? And that’s true whether you are having a **formal class-time or not**, right? And it’s also true of **both parents**, not just **the mother!** So what are you teaching them?

--Are you supposed to teach **your children to fly?** Of course not! An eagle teaches an eaglet to fly because that is what **eagles were created** to do! So we need to teach our children to do what they were created to do: to **know** God...and **love** God...and **obey** God and **follow God’s plan** and **God’s will** for their lives.

**Deuteronomy 10:12-13** “And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God **require of thee, but to fear** the Lord thy God, **to walk in all His ways**, and to **love Him**, and to **serve the Lord thy God** with all thy heart and with all thy soul,<sup>13</sup> **To keep the commandments of the Lord**, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?”

**2) Just as eaglets need to be taught not to rely forever on their parents, your children need to learn to depend on God!** The goal of the eagle is not just to teach **their eaglets to fly**—they are also teaching them how to **feed themselves!** And that should be the goal of parents, too!

--Do I mean that **literally—or figuratively?** To which I reply, **Yes!**

--If **you don’t teach** your children how to bake and cook and make food, are **you counting on feeding them** the rest of your lives? Or are you counting **on the person they marry** to feed them?

--But there’s **more to living than just eating**, isn’t there? They need to be taught **how to work hard** so they can make a living! Thinking back on my childhood, **my mom** is the one who taught me to work hard.

**Why** not my Dad? Because he drove truck and left before dark—and got home after dark. But my Mom was always there—and she was a hard worker with a myriad of talents.

--**Working hard and making a living** is not the only thing parents should teach their children, though. Children need to be taught to transfer their dependence **from their parents** to a dependence **on God**.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://kidoneo.com/how-do-eagles-teach-their-babies-to-fly/>

And they will best learn how to depend on God as they see **you depend on God**. They need to see you **reading and feeding on the Word of God** and knowing the promises of God and depending on those promises.

--Oh, how I wish I had done a better job at that! **I taught** our children the Bible, but didn't do a very good job of teaching them **how to apply the Bible** in everyday life!

--I should have done a better job of following **Deuteronomy 6:6-7** "And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be **in thine heart**: <sup>7</sup>And thou shalt **teach them diligently unto thy children**, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."

**3) Just as eaglets had to learn that the stirring up the nest was good for them, we need to believe that trials are good for us!** Would the eaglets have wanted **to leave the nest** if they remained forever comfortable? Would God's people have ever **wanted to leave Egypt** if they weren't under bondage?

--Do we hunger and thirst after righteousness more in the **midst of trials**—or on a flowery bed of ease?

Notice what David says about affliction in **Psalms 119:67** "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word." What is David saying? That affliction—troubles and trials—got him **off the path of straying**—and onto the path of obedience!

He makes a similar statement just a few verses later. **Psalms 119:71** "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." Here again David says that **affliction is a teacher** that helps him learn God's Word better. **What about us?** Is that the way we view trials? It is obviously the way **God wants us to view them**, or He wouldn't have had them recorded in His Word!

So there you have it: two "motherly" pictures of God where He is described as a hen and an eagle!

--As a **hen gathers her chicks**, God wants you to understand His **love for you**—and the desire He has for you to **draw near** to Him and be **protected** by Him.

--And as a mother eagle teaches her young to fly, God wants you to learn—and pursue—the reason for which **you were created**—to **know** God and **love** God and **obey** God and **serve** God.

--Are you doing that? If not, don't be surprised if God "stirs up the nest" and brings some affliction!

So what would God have you do in light of what you heard this morning?

1. First and foremost, you must understand this: God is loving and protective and tender to **His children**—but **not everyone** is a child of God! We are **not born into** God's family—we need to be **adopted into** God's family!

--How do we get adopted into God's family?

--Not by being baptized

--And not by trying to be a good person

--And not by belonging to a certain church!

--We are adopted into God's family when we come to God **just as we are**—a sinner desperately needing forgiveness and mercy!

--And when we come to God in humility and repentance, God points us to Jesus and says, "Here is my gift to you. Receive Him—by faith—and trust only in what He did on the cross for the payment of your sins."

--John 1:12 "But as many as received Him [Jesus], to them He [God] gives the power [the right] to become the sons [children] of God."

2. Second—if you are a child of God—don't stray from God your protector and provider!

3. Third, how's your parenting? Are you following God's guidance—or your own wisdom?