There out to kill Jesus. The first of many that will lead us to Good Friday. This time its Herod. ‘that fox’ Jesus calls him, rather marvellously.

In this short passage, there are lots of layers that would have been obvious to St Luke’s hearers. Those typically Middle Eastern, ancient and Jewish layers of meaning that we modern western gentiles so often just don’t have ears to hear.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem. Of course it’s the place of sacrifice. Josephus a contemporary Jewish writer tells us that a ¼ million lambs are sacrificed in the Temple by Jews every Passover. Of course it’s the locus and destination of all prophetic ministry and all sacrificial death.

And then there’s the three days timing. Three days of Jonah in the belly of the whale. 3 days of Jesus in the belly of the earth. All these layers.

And that wonderful image of Jesus as the caring mother hen, gathering her brood. What an image, and one lots of people miss. Meditate on that image in your prayer time this week, see where it takes you.

In this passage we are reminded, in prophets and saviours and children gathered by a motherly God that God cares, and God provides.

In today’s first lesson God tells Abram that his ‘ descendants shall be more numerous than the stars’. God cares, God provides. And now we see as a post Pentecost people exactly that, God’s children, Christ’s own body, the Church of God, is great and small across the world.

And today we are also reminded, so appropriate as we journey through Lent to the Upper Room, the Cross of Calvary and the empty tomb, that God comes to rescue. ‘Jerusalem...You will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord’. That cry the choir sings on our behalf at the end of the sanctus before the consecration of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus at every Eucharist. That Palm Sunday cry from Christ’s entry into Jerusalem that we will echo in our own Church Garden in a few weeks time. ‘Blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest!’ And Hosanna means rescue us, save us. God provides, God cares, God rescues us.

And we, we (and I accuse myself in this, most clearly) we destroy. We take for granted. We exploit. God saves, God provides, God cares, and we destroy and takes for granted and exploit.
Own lives, those around us. The destruction of the Ukraine, the destruction of the people and lands far away who make our things and fuel the systems that make me fat. The environmental destruction we wreak upon the world in the name of plenty and convenience. Do engage with our Lent appeal about giving up our carbon footprint for Lent, online, on portico, in flyers at the back. And I don’t say any of this with any satisfaction, this is all true of me too.

So, if not simply despair and sit in sackloth and ashes, what are we to do?

Lent, is the answer. Lent, the Springtime for the soul is a time to reorientate. Recalibrate, like a compass, our faith, our relationships with God, self and other, need recalibration. That is the gift of the church year to us.  
So... in the face of the God who provides and cares and rescues, and our ingratitude and destruction and exploitation.

Become more grateful?!  
Shift behaviours?!  
Be someone who prays and lives for peace at home and abroad?!

That’s all very well to say, and all very well to want to do, but what are the chances that any such words or intentions will last us leaving this holy place, or even at best, to Monday afternoon?  
No, we know as religious people that we have to build habit. Habit is our friend. Like Sunday and weekday Eucharists, putting Eucharists and prayer times and reading the Gospels in our diaries. Do it - habit is our friend.

Prayer last thing at night, a cross by bed or iPhone reminder to jog you:  
To Give thanks, review day with God’s eyes.  
Helpful habit building behaviours that will nudge you to pray for peace at large, and as you look forward to next day, ask God to be with you in that meeting, that conversation, that moment at home when peace is most tricky.

Our spiritual lives don’t happen by accident. If we are to recalibrate and shift who we are from exploitation and ingratitude and destruction, we actually have to construct our lives in such a way that they will help us, by habit, towards being sharers of God’s provision and care and salvation.

Jesus, our messiah, our saviour, came and gave Himself as a caring mother hen. He gives himself to us now, in this new way of God’s provision - no longer prophets In Jerusalem but bread and wine, His own self and life in the Sacrament of the altar.  
In the words of the Gospels, in private prayer time, in the living of the liturgical year and the proper keeping of Lent and living of every bit of Holy Week as I hope we all will. That so strengthened by His provision in these ways we may journey into Jerusalem. Habit is our friend. Build that in this Lent. And continue on the journey, to this Jerusalem here in the Parish Church, and home to the Golden Jerusalem above.