

HE TOUCHED ME

Your Weekly Devotional

June XXXX, 2026

GATHERING IN, SENDING OUT

By Donna Schaper

Jesus said to them, "How often I have wanted to gather you together as a mother hen gathers her little ones under her wings." – Matthew 23:37

Jesus's tender love reminds me of a mother who, as she is dying, begs her children to get along. "That's what you could do for me." The eternal sibling rivalry is just too much for many mothers and for our mothering God.

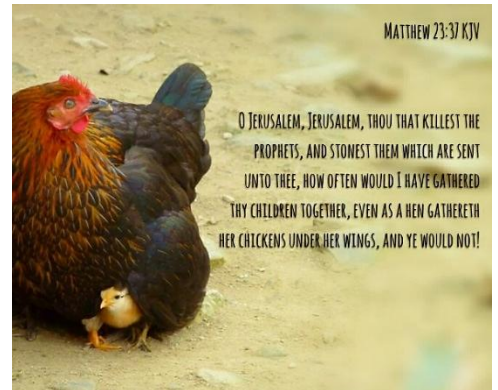
What's to be done about it? Ask the parental God whose children only took two generations to murder. Their names—Cain and Abel—are noticeably not in wide circulation. They sound too much like a curse.

Jesus would rather issue a blessing: I wanted to gather you. I wanted to wing you. I wanted you safe. You chose something else.

Recently a visiting preacher told the story of our church's benediction, which includes, "The service begins now." At my last settled church, we indulged that false binary, too. My predecessor blessed folk on their way, saying, "The real service starts now." I spent 15 years trying to show them that worship and work are the same thing, that results aren't everything.

I wish I could convince myself—and other loving hens—that the real service is in the longing for the gathering that does not exist. That no matter how long we gathered our beloveds under our wings, they still had to fly away on their own terms. My benediction would be "This service is done now and the next one begins." There is not one service that is better than the other: the worship or the work, the gathering or the results.

Prayer: Holy One, remove the activism from my mothering and let the both/and of some peace, some of the time, replace it.



Camping

RYMCTEGNIKIHN SF OJBXUP
QJNAHNVDZSALSISLAMINA
MEMORIE SFM WEPJBT S NCGH
DOXPOS QLMURICZTAKAYAK
ICSJBCHOLTAGMEPNCTWFO
FAYQEXCMTECVRMODIUSLG
ZMOHUKJAAWPIFGILTRMAE
UPNYGIMQRL EEXCVNSEBSN
DSKOFRTBWSLKRAJMGGZHO
NIGNIKOOCROODTUONPMLI
ATVAHTUJEGXBWFCIIQDIT
LEFCDYARHSNMZUPETKOGA
SBOSWMI VTRAILERQSJEHC
IWTULFZSRYGTEXDHANSTA
KNUMPIHCJEQLAOKWOTIBV
YLDMCOMPASSFBHNXREGZD
BHA EJWKSMORESNIATNUOM
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- air mattress
- animals
- batteries
- cabin
- campfire
- campsite
- canoeing
- chipmunk
- compass
- flashlight
- hammock
- hiking
- insect repellent
- island
- kayak
- lantern
- marshmallow
- memories
- mosquitoes
- mountains
- nature
- outdoor cooking
- raccoon
- reservation
- roasting sticks
- s'mores
- sleeping bag
- summer
- swimming
- tent
- trailer
- vacation



"What did I learn in school today, I learned my teacher has no sense of humor."

