

August 2026

This morning on my way home from Blakesley I stopped at Foxley to buy some granola and there on the side of the road I saw a lovely sight which you don't see very often – a hen and her brood of young chicks scratching in the dust. As I crept forward to take a photo she very protectively gathered them all to her and tried to shelter them out of sight.

It's natural for a mother hen to try and protect her young and there are stories which tell how after a farmyard fire, those cleaning up have found a dead hen, scorched and blackened, with live chicks sheltering under her wings. She had quite literally given her own life to save them.

This image is a powerful metaphor for God's protective, self-sacrificing love, and found in the Bible. In Psalm 91 the psalmist tells us that 'God will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge' – (pinions are a bird's outer flight or wing feathers). And as we know, Jesus did indeed, like the scorched hen protecting her chicks, sacrifice his life so that we may live.

It is, of course, important to remember that although God is continuously offering us his shelter and protection, the metaphor highlights that it's up to us whether we listen to God's call and run to him for safety... or scurry away in the opposite direction, taking no notice of the smoke and flames indicating the approach of danger, nor of the urgent warnings of the one who alone can keep us safe.

God bless

Revd Sue

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