

Nursery Rhyme Christians

In the Scriptures, Christians are compared to many things. There are many standards of comparison that are drawn, illustrations to show what our lives are to be or what they are not. We are to be like soldiers who fight the good fight, who are well equipped as we take on the full armor of God. We are to be like marathon runners running the race set before us. We are to run in such a way as to get the prize.

We are to be like a builder who builds his house upon a rock, but we are also compared to the building, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. Jesus also compares us to little children when he says, *“Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter in to the kingdom of heaven.”* The apostle Peter tells us, *“As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.”*

When it comes to our dependence on God or our desire for His truth we are called to be like babies. However, when it comes to our spiritual maturity, we are not to be like babies. We are to grow and develop in our faith. We are to leave childish things behind. In Hebrews 5:11-14 we read this:

Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. 13For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. 14But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

There is a time where every single one of us is a babe in Christ, and we welcome all who are newborns in their faith, but we are not to remain in our infancy. This morning I want to reintroduce you to some old friends from your childhood. Perhaps you remember them. We all learned nursery rhymes as little children, and I want to revisit a few this morning. And no, I’m not talking about the ones that began with things like, “beans, beans, the musical fruit...”

I’m talking about the classic nursery rhymes. Mother Goose introduces us to some rather curious and odd characters who teach us some important lessons about life. They also teach us some important lessons about faith. They give us some examples we will not want to follow.

I. Little Boy Blue

We begin with little boy blue. Do you remember this one?

Little Boy Blue, come blow your horn.
The sheep's in the meadow, the cow's in the corn.
Where is the boy that looks after the sheep?
"He's under the haystack, fast asleep."
Will you wake him? "No, not I;

For if I do, he'll be sure to cry."

Little Boy Blue had a job to do, but did he do his job? No. He didn't. Where do we find Blue? He's under the haystack taking a nap. Both the sheep and the cows are in the wrong place. And we can't even wake him up, because we might hurt his poor little feelings. There is certainly a lesson here about irresponsibility and not resting before the work is done. But there is also a faith lesson here.

You see, there are Little Boy Blue Christians. They have a job to do. God has called them to service. We have all been gifted, equipped and enabled by the Holy Spirit to build up the body of Christ, but when there's kingdom work to be done, you can never find Little Boy Blue Christians, because they're hiding under a haystack somewhere. Little Boy Blue Christians have job to do, but they find a haystack instead. They bury themselves in the haystack of family, of sports, of friends, of hobbies, of school, or career. They don't use their God-given gifts to build the kingdom, because they are buried under these haystacks of activity. They're not bad things. In fact, they can be excellent and praiseworthy in their proper places. But we neglect our calling and squander our gifts when we put them in the most important positions. We make idols of them.

Family is important, and it is to be pursued and defended, even as the second most important thing in our lives, but when we put it before the kingdom, we hide from what God calls us to. Our jobs are essential. Without them we couldn't support our families or the kingdom, but when we put them before the kingdom, we become Little Boy Blue Christians. The same is true of all the other haystacks we lose ourselves in. Jesus tells us, "*Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.*" You can enjoy all the haystacks in their proper place, when you put God and his kingdom first.

We might not think being busy with these activities are the same thing as Little Boy Blue sleeping on the job, but the apostle Paul says differently. In 1 Thessalonians 5, he tells us that the Day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night, and if we are not prepared, darkness will come suddenly upon us. All of these people who are unprepared will be busy with many things. They will be building careers, pursuing dreams, closing deals, falling in and out of love, but do you know how Paul describes them? He says they are sleeping. Spiritually, they are asleep to the reality of what's going on, and what's coming. And Paul tells us in 1 Thess. 5:6, "*Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.*"

Let us not be Little Boy Blue Christians.

II. Jack and Jill

Our second nursery rhyme is Jack and Jill. You remember these two don't you and their most famous quatrain?

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water .
Jack fell down and broke his crown,
And Jill came tumbling after

Did you know that in the 1800s there was a booklet published in Europe with 15 stanzas of this nursery rhyme? Don't worry though. We're only looking at the first one. What happened with Jack and Jill? They too had a job to do. They had been sent to fetch a pail of water. We're not told why or whose bright idea it was to put the well or water pump at the top of the hill, but that doesn't matter. That's where they had to go.

Unlike Little Boy Blue, they did not skirt their responsibility. They were very ambitious. The way my grandfather learned and told this rhyme. Jack and Jill ran up the hill. But they were not careful. Maybe they were goofing off. Maybe, as children are wont to do, they just weren't being cautious. Jack slipped and fell, and cracked his head open. Setting the example for his sister, or perhaps he took her down with him, she came tumbling after.

Again there are obvious lessons here for young ones. When you have a job to do, do it carefully. Not only could you hurt yourself; you could hurt others too. This is the nursery rhyme version of safety first.

There is also a spiritual analogy, for there are Jack and Jill Christians. Jack and Jill Christians have great ambition, but stumble for lack of caution. They do not shirk their responsibility. Instead, they dive in head first. They take off like a bolt of lightning, but they don't think things through. They don't plan their steps carefully. Maybe they take on too much and burn themselves out. Maybe they run roughshod over the thoughts and feelings of others in their rush to get the work done. Maybe they don't seek God's wisdom and strength and try to do it all on their own, and because of this, their great starts never lead to great finishes.

With Jack and Jill Christians, there are projects and ministries started, but never completed. A series of broken and wounded hearts lie in their wake. They miss out on the joy of the Lord, because they didn't do God's work God's way with God's supply. Jack and Jill Christians also end up broken themselves.

As Christians it takes more than enthusiasm and gusto. It takes spiritual depth and wisdom. It takes prayer and dependence on God. Eager ambition that isn't rooted in spiritual depth will result in

you stumbling and falling. Paul wants us in 1 Corinthians 10:12, *“Let him that thinketh he stand take heed lest he fall.”*

A few weeks ago, we considered the parable of the soils in Matthew 13, and in that story Jesus told how some of the seed fell upon stony places that had not much earth and they quickly sprung up, but because they had not deepness of earth they were scorched in the sun and withered away.

Unless we want to become Jack and Jill Christians, we must go deeper as well as go forward. The Christian life is a journey from earth to heaven. It’s not just a quick run up the hill. It’s a marathon not a sprint. It’s often not the runner who bursts out to a quick lead that wins the long race. We must still be running at the end.

III. Humpty Dumpty

Our last nursery rhyme character is one of my favorites from my childhood, Humpty Dumpty. The earliest depictions show Humpty as an egg, although the rhyme never says he is. I think we all know this one don’t we.

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

However, did you know those are not the original words? Just a little bit of historical trivia for you. The oldest known version dating from 1797 goes like this:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
Four-score Men and Four-score more,
Could not make Humpty Dumpty where he was before.

Humpty Dumpty’s problem was that he didn’t go all the way. Obviously, he didn’t want to stay where he was before. That’s why he scaled the wall. But poor old Humpty never got to where he was going, he simply sat on the wall. You cannot expect good things to happen when you sit on the fence.

This is the story of so many Humpty Dumpty Christians. Humpty Dumpty Christians haven’t gone all the way, but they stay on the fence. They don’t want to remain in the world, but they don’t want to commit fully to the kingdom either. They think that by sitting on the fence they can have the best of both worlds. They want to enjoy the ways of the world and have the promises of God at the same time. Unable to leave the world behind, they don’t seek first the kingdom of God.

Every Sunday, churches are filled with these Humpty Dumpty Christians. They are on the fence looking at the promises of God, and enjoying some of what the kingdom has to offer. They want to get

close enough to receive its blessings, but they always try to keep the world close at hand. They live a life of sin on Saturday, worship on Sunday. Humpty Dumpty Christians cannot remain on the fence forever.

But Jesus warned us that we cannot serve two masters. We will love one and hate the other. The children of Israel in the Old Testament tried to be the Humpty Dumpty people of God. They wanted the blessings of the Promised Land, but they never left the idols of the world behind.

We see the same thing in the church. This is why Jesus warned the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:16, *"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."*

So we as Christians must not remain on the fence. Make today the day that you climb down off the fence and seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Follow him fully. There's nothing in the world worth hanging onto. Your letting go of empty promises that never deliver. The promise of fun that only becomes futility. The promise of pleasure that only becomes only the pale reflection of something that once felt good. The promise of wealth that only becomes the weight of all that you might lose. The promise of popularity that becomes only pressure to perform and conform.

All the good things of God's creation are yours anyway in Christ Jesus. *"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."* Your heavenly Father keeps nothing good from you. Leave the hollow, shallow, empty promises of the world behind. Come down off the fence this morning and be His. When he calls you, go all the way. Be truly his and his alone!!

He is calling you today. He is calling you follow him. He is calling to come down off the fence. He is calling you to come home. He is calling you to the place you truly belong. And if you've already fallen off the wall, He is the only one who can put you together again. Not the king's horses. Not the king's men. Only the King of kings can put you back together again. Jesus is calling. Come home.