

Sunday, June 19, 2016

“The Parable of Penteuchio”

Genesis 12-25; Hosea 11:1-11; Luke 15

Contemporary Contact

“In the beginning...” or “Once upon a time...” are wonderful phrases aren’t they. Most of us have to take notes to remember a lesson or the points in a sermon, but a story, especially a good story stays with us and lingers.

- “Once upon a time there were a good king and queen who were very sad because they had no children.” (= Sleeping Beauty)
- “Once upon a time there was a beautiful maiden who lived with her wicked stepsisters.” (= Snow White)
- “A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...” (= Star Wars)
- “Once upon a time there was a man who had two sons...” (= Prodigal Son)

There is a time and place for theological propositions, for biblical principles and divine decrees that give clear definition and direction to us who have lost our way. But as Eugene Peterson notes in the preface to his book on the parables of Jesus, “God’s words are not always prefaced by ‘Thus says the Lord.’”¹

The gospels, tell us that one of the most common ways Jesus taught the people about God and His ways was by telling parables (stories with a spiritual lesson). Indeed, we read in Matthew 13:34-35 that one occasion,

“All Jesus did that day was tell stories—a long storytelling afternoon. His storytelling fulfilled the prophecy: ‘I will open my mouth and tell stories; I will bring out into the open things hidden since the world’s first day.’”

The lead figure in many of Jesus stories presented some activity or aspect of God, whom Jesus most often referred to in the personal language of “my Father”. So this morning I’m going to try and do what Jesus did on that storytelling afternoon when He taught them about His heavenly Father. Those familiar with the Bible will hear echoes of some ancient characters, but also a few more contemporary ones. That is what Jesus’ stories did too.

¹ Eugene Peterson, Tell It Slant, p. 4.

I would like to be able to take credit for the story I am going to tell you this morning but I can't. I got it from long time pastor and author Calvin Miller who renovated and refashioned several ancient and modern stories into what he calls "The Parable of Penteuchio".

A Few Explanatory Notes

- Marionette = a wooden puppet with strings (like Pinocchio...A retelling of the story which actually echoes themes and characters in the grand story of the Bible)
- Torah = Hebrew word for what we call the "Old Testament" (lit. = "teaching" or "instruction")
- Pentateuch = the first five books of the Torah (foundational teachings)

Read pages 15-24 in An Owner's Manual for the Unfinished Soul.

Closing Questions **SLIDE**

Q¹ – Which character in the story did you identify with most, and why?

Q² – What relational interaction did you find most distressing? Most comforting?

In his book, How Children Raise Parents, Dan Allender says that,

"Any honest parent will admit they often feel like a complete failure. But what if being a success isn't God's highest goal for parents? What if God gives us children to grow us up, even as we do our best to raise our kids well?"

Q³ – How has (or is), God used kids/grandkids to help raise you?

Q⁴ – If you were to have a heart to heart conversation with God like Japheth, what would you talk about? What question would you (or God) ask? What request would you (or God) make?