

The gospel story from Luke the Storyteller warns of death, destruction, the falling of stones, and false prophets. Reading it is enough to send you to your medicine cabinet for an extra Xanax. There ought to be a more entertaining way to get this message across. Wait. There is. And, we've known the story since childhood!

Listen:

Once upon a time there was a little chicken, and everybody called him--Chicken Little.

And one day while he was out walking, up in the sky a bird flew over and it dropped an acorn, and the acorn fell down and-- bip-- bopped him on his head.

Chicken Little said "AWK!" and looked up, and didn't see anything, and he looked down and didn't see anything. So he said "Help, help the sky is falling! Help, help the sky is falling! I have to tell the King!"

And he went running down the road, looking for the King. As he was running he met Henny Penny. And Henny Penny said, "Buk Buk Buk BUK! What's wrong with you?"

And Chicken Little said, "Oh Henny Penny! Haven't you heard-- the sky is falling! I'm looking for the King."

And Henny Penny said, "Oh my, how exciting. Buk buk buk BUK! Can I go too?"

And they went down the road together, shouting "Help, help the sky is falling! Help, help the sky is falling! We have to tell the King!"

After awhile they met Goosey Loosey. “Honk! Honk! What’s wrong with you?”

“Oh, Goosey Loosey, haven’t you heard? The sky is falling! We have to tell the King!”

“Honk Honk! That’s terrible! Can I go too?” And they all went down the road together shouting “Help, help the sky is falling! Help, help the sky is falling! We have to tell the King!”

And along the road, they met Turkey Lurkey. And Turkey Lurkey said “Gobble gobble gobble! What in the world is wrong with you?”

“Oh, Turkey Lurkey. Haven’t you heard? The sky is falling! The sky is falling! We’re looking for the King!”

“Gobble gobble gobble! Oh that’s terrible! Can I go too?” And they all went down the road saying “Help, help the sky is falling! Help, help the sky is falling! We have to tell the King!”

And they went down the road, and they met Foxey Loxey. And Foxey Loxey said, “What in the world is wrong with you?”

And they told him, “Oh, Foxey Loxey, haven’t you heard? The sky is falling! We have to tell the King!”

“Nothing easier,” said Foxey Loxey. “He’s back there in my den. But the King doesn’t like to feel crowded, so I’d better bring you in one by one. Now, who wants to go first?”

Everybody wanted to be first to see the King, but the Turkey was the biggest. “Gobble gobble gobble. Me first! I want to see the King!” and he pushed everybody else away.

“Come with me,” says Foxy Loxey, and they went into the hole together. Then there was a lot of squawking down there, and some feathers came flying out, and the fox called up, “NEXT”

“Honk Honk. Me! I want to go! Me” said Goosey Loosey, and she pushed her way in. More squawking, more feathers, and the fox said “NEXT!”

“Buk buk buk BUK!” said Henny Penny, and she jumped in the hole. Squawks, feathers, and then..... no sound at all.

Right then, Chicken Little remembered it was his turn to take the garbage out, and he went home. So poor Chicken Little never got to see the King.

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Our fowl cast of characters have made some significant mistakes. The first jumped to a conclusion that had no merit. In a “tweet” that continues to be forwarded on, the conclusion takes on a life of its own. Others are drawn into the assumption. Eventually, the false Fox tricks the distracted females and lures them to their end. It’s not until he distracts himself again that Chicken Little walks away. He walks away, yet he is disappointed that he didn’t get to be in the presence of the King.

The disciples looked at the shiny, jeweled stones of Herod’s Temple and were mesmerized. Aren’t these buildings amazing!

“Don’t be distracted,” Jesus tells them. “All of these will fall to the ground.” Luke was speaking from experience. Writing this gospel somewhere between 75 – 85 of the common era, Luke’s community would have been witnesses of the Roman legions storming Jerusalem and destroying the gleaming edifice of Judaism. Luke described Jesus as being prophetic because it actually happened!

About the rest of the events, well, they happened too. As a matter of fact, they keep happening. It doesn’t take a Ph.D. in world history to understand that wars keep getting fought, natural disasters keep happening, and institutions nearly always fall.

The disturbing part of this narrative for us is that Jesus turns the conversation directly to the disciples and says that this gloom, despair, and agony isn’t for institutions and governments alone. For the disciples, it will be personal, just like it was for the hens. They will be arrested and brought before the authorities, betrayed by relatives and friends. Nearly all will die. Luke wrote this from experience as well. Discipleship isn’t for the faint of heart.

So, what do disciples of Jesus do in the 21st century? We look around and see our institutions in shambles. False prophets invite us to go down foxholes that can only serve to destroy us. We are easily distracted by the glitter and glitz of Hollywood and Madison Avenue. Do we just give up and give in? Enjoy this life like there is no alternative?

Jesus says that we may only live once, but that life is too precious to waste and our world is too precious to give up on. We can't be distracted from the real message in this gospel: that we need not be afraid. God is in charge. God always has been and always will be. Yes, we may suffer through pain, but God has our back. In fact, if we allow the Holy Spirit to transform our pain, we may be given opportunities to tell our stories of hope.

Friends, we cannot squawk and run from what appears to be disaster. Don't be distracted. Be thankful if the only thing the birds drop on your heads are acorns! The King is coming. The King is coming in a most surprising way. And, we will all see him, face-to-face. Keep the faith. Be patient. Be steadfast. Be Christ's disciples. Amen.