

Ash Wednesday (Year-B) The scripture text is taken from II Corinthians 5:20-6:10

I think that most everybody in here tonight is familiar with this little rhyme, we learned this as children.

“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 Dumpty back together again.”

Just a clever little rhyme, often animated with a funny egg figure perched up on a wall. But tonight, I want us to take a closer look at this little rhyme.

I am often amazed at the profound meanings that come from children’s books and children’s nursery rhymes like this one.

Perhaps this poem remains popular among children, because it has a deeper meaning that we all can sense.

In this silly little poem, we have portrayed our human condition and the futility of most of our efforts to fix the world in which we live, and tonight, I want to suggest that it can serve as an outline for understanding what the Apostle Paul says in our text for this Ash Wednesday, from II Corinthians, chapter 5.

“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.” This line is the beginning of the poem, but it also parallels the beginning of humankind.

The poem sets up the action with a simple statement. Perhaps it was a lovely spring day with flowers blooming and birds chirping. From his perch, Humpty Dumpty declares that all is right with his world.

We can all identify with the peaceful tranquility as he sat on the wall. But things are a mess now.

Can you remember back to such a time? When life didn’t seem to be such a mess? How far back do you have to go, to recover the innocence of your youth.

Back before the Fall, back before you made a mess of your life, back when, relationships were right. After the Fall, we look back with envy, at the simple times of sitting on a wall so to speak.

The Bible says the same happened in the beginning of time. God sat humankind on a wall. The writer of Genesis tells us in chapter 1, starting at verse 26, says: “Then God said, “Let us make human kind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

It was, as if, God made humankind and set them up, upon a wall. Before the Fall, Adam and Eve were able to relate perfectly with God, to feel His nearness, and to communicate personally with Him.

But then something happened in our poem, something happened in creation, and something happened in our lives. In all three, we can describe it as the Fall.

“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall”. The poem gives us no clue to the cause of Humpty Dumpty’s fall.

Maybe the wall became slippery, or maybe Humpty Dumpty became distracted, or maybe Humpty Dumpty tried to reach for something that was too far away. Regardless, in the nursery rhyme, the fall of Humpty is a mystery, but not in creation and not with us.

The scriptures tell us that humans tried to reach higher than they were meant to. We can picture Adam and Eve on their tiptoes, just reaching just beyond their grasp.

In the story from the Book of Genesis, God told Adam and Eve, that they were not to eat of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden. But of course, the snake in the garden, convinced, Eve, that she could eat of the fruit of the tree, so she convinced Adam to partake as well.

So when the first human beings, (Adam and Eve) tried to reach out, to something that was beyond their reach, therefore, there was a great fall.

This fall represents the entry point of sin, into creation. This sin problem lies at the root of all the messes we have made of our lives.

The sin problem will occupy all the books of the Bible. All of us have fallen too. Our fall has to do more, with just than the Garden Eden, past.

The fall that the scriptures make reference to is not just in the past, but it is something very much in the present, right now, and will continue with us until Christ returns.

It is personal for each of us. For each of us comes to a point, when we want that which is harmful to us. When stop listening to God and the let the snake tell us what to do, we change our loyalty from the creator, to the creature. We reach for the forbidden fruit.

The Bible warns us in the Book of Proverbs, chapter 16, verse 18: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

One false step, and suddenly we find our lives tumbling out of control. We never intended for it turn out this way.

We just stretched out, for one enticing bit of fruit, but suddenly the consequences of our sin, are far greater than we expected.

Suddenly, we all lie, like Humpty Dumpty at the bottom of the wall, broken, shattered, and fragmented. We lie there, knowing that unless something drastic, happens our fall, will be fatal.

"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 Dumpty back together again."

Suddenly, much to our relief, up ride the King's men and their horses to put us back together again.

But who are these men? And who is their king? The poem, once again leaves us in the dark. We have no idea who these "king's men" are, but we can see them, picking up the broken pieces of our eggshell Humpty Dumpty, trying to fit them together.

Perhaps they attempt to glue the pieces back together. Perhaps they have tape. But the poem makes it clear that there was no fixing what was broken.

The King's men fail. They couldn't put Humpty Dumpty back together again!

We've had our experience with the King's men too. Perhaps today, we would call these "King's men" these failed efforts, by names like Dr. Phil, or Oprah, or Self-Help Books, or some politician or some know it all actor, or actress, who doesn't know anything or by our own arrogant self.

In the end, we have concluded that the children's poem is exactly right. All the King's horses and all the King's men's could put Humpty Dumpty back together again.

To what do we compare this part of the children's poem, when we consider the Creation Story? I would suggest that the King's men represent the failed attempts to reconcile human-beings and God as told in the first 39 books of the Bible. (in other words the Old Testament)

The early Patriarchs might have been the King's men, but they failed to put that broken relationship back together. The Law of Moses represented the greatest attempt. Everyone thought that finally the King's men would put us back together again. But in the end, the Law failed to achieve its purpose.

Finally God, sent His Son, the King Himself, so that He could do, what all the King's men could not do. Listen to what the Apostle Paul tells us (this is from II Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 18). Paul writes: "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

The problem with the law, was that it worked on the outside of us, it tried to patch us up, to bandage us together, apply a little first aid cream here and there, now put on a piece of tape.

Jesus Christ is the only one who can put humankind back together again. Christ does this, by starting all over and making a new creation.

The King of kings and Lord of lords does what all the King's men cannot do. The King's men (of the world) cannot put us together again, because they did not make us to start with. The only One who made us in the beginning, can put us back together again.

The solution to our brokenness, does not come when we are reformed, rehabilitated or re-educated. It only comes when we are recreated and transformed.

It will not do, to "turn over a new leaf" so to speak, we must begin again, with a new life under a new master. We must be born again.

And that rebirth, starts by God's baptismal grace, which is given to you and I freely, through the life, death and resurrection, through God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Apostle Paul tells us in II Corinthians chapter 5 verse 17: "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away, see everything has become new!"

When we trust in Christ, we are no longer God's enemies, or strangers or foreigners to Him. Through Christ, we have been reconciled to God.

By Christ's death upon the cross, and His resurrection over sin, death and the devil, we who once walked in darkness, we have been brought back into the light of God.

When we are reconciled to God, we are brought back to God, and we can now, be reconciled to one another.

And I am going to take it forward with this as well. As Christians, as those who have been saved by God's grace through faith in Christ, we have been reconciled to God and to each other, and through this reconciliation, Christ has called us to be "Ambassadors".

Meaning that, because Christ is in us, we are in Him, therefore we are to go out into the world, wherever our part of the world may be, and represent Christ.

We do not have the power to put people together, but we know the King, who can.

We are called to reach out to the lost, those who live in spiritual darkness, those who do not know Christ as Lord and Savior, our calling is to reach out to them, and to share the light of Christ with them.

We are to proclaim that God is still in the business of reconciling the world to Himself, and that Christ is still picking up the pieces, of those who are broken by their sins, and that Christ wants a relationship with them and wants to forgive them of their sins, and to make them whole.

I want to finish out the message for tonight with this: "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall, and all the King's horses and all the King's men, could not put Humpty Dumpty back together again.

Then the real king came to his aid, brought reconciliation, not a band-aid. Jesus brought new birth and new creation, made Humpty Dumpty, whole and brought jubilation.

Placed Humpty Dumpty back on the wall, then He gave Humpty Dumpty a brand new call, Ambassador of Christ, is now his new name.

Healing the broken is now his game. If you find yourself at the foot of the wall, to the king of kings you should give a call, and just like Humpty Dumpty of old, Christ will come and make you whole." Amen.

Let us pray:

Lord God, on the day, this evening, as we place the ashes on our foreheads, help us to remember, that we are sinful, weak, frail, mortal broken, and fallen. We are nothing more than the dust of the earth. Yet, out of a great love, You sent your Son into this world to reconcile us to Him, by the shedding of His Holy and precious blood upon that cross, and by death, our sins have been forgiven, and by His resurrection, we have been made new, and we have been given the promise of eternal life. Empower us, to go forth from here this evening as Ambassadors for Christ in all that we say and do. All these things we humbly in Jesus Christ's most precious and holy name. AMEN.