

## “Mother Goose Was Wrong”

Date: March 10, 2019

Place: Lakewood UMC

Texts: Psalm 103:8-12; John 8:1-11 Occasion: Lent 1, series Forgiveness

Themes: Forgiveness, reconciliation

“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.” But Mother Goose was wrong; or at least partially wrong. All the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put Humpty together again, on their own.

BUT, the King could put Humpty back together. I stand before you this morning to tell you that Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, is in the business of putting people back together again. Today is the first Sunday of Lent and we are beginning our series on the topic of forgiveness.

We’re going to be using a book written by Adam Hamilton in our Lenten study group entitled *“Forgiveness: Finding Peace Through Letting Go.”* Over the next four weeks we’ll be looking at four common relationships in which we find ourselves in need of receiving or offering forgiveness – our relationship with God; with our spouses or romantic interests; with our parents and siblings; and with all others in our lives.

I don’t pretend to have all of the answers about forgiveness; there are so many dimensions to forgiveness, and every situation in which forgiveness is required is unique. But I’ll try to cover the big concepts surrounding forgiveness and the most common relationships in which we need to give or receive it. I pray you will find hope and encouragement as you seek reconciliation through the act of forgiveness – both giving and asking for it.

On page 367 of our hymnal you'll find one of Bill Gaither's most popular hymns. It's called "He Touched Me." It begins: "Shackled by a heavy burden, 'neath a load of guilt and shame; then the hand of Jesus touched me, and now I am no longer the same."

The reason that hymn is so popular, in my opinion, is that so many people can identify with its message – "Shackled by a heavy burden, 'neath a load of guilt and shame." Yes, guilt pierces our soul like a sharp knife. It drags us down with its weight. It robs us of the joy of living. It steals our self-esteem from us. It fills us with a nagging sense of unworthiness. Guilt is indeed a heavy burden we carry.

The burden we carry may be the result of some very public and obvious thing we have done. Perhaps it made the news, or you had to go to prison for the thing you had done. Maybe all of the neighbors or all of your church friends found out about the mistake and sin you committed. That kind of guilt is especially heavy.

But we also carry guilt for secret sins, ones that no one but you and maybe one other person knows about. It could be infidelity, shop lifting, writing bad checks, lying, or gossiping. Maybe you feel remorse about having had an abortion years ago. Secret sins can also be heavy, because you have no one to tell.

You may also feel guilty about a bad habit you can't seem to overcome, like drinking too much, or a temper you can't control, or gambling or promiscuity. You want to stop; you want to change; you want to be different, but you keep on doing the same thing over and over again. And the reminder of your failure only makes you feel all the more guilty.

Every harsh word, every unclean thought, every instance in which we neglect to do the right thing, or we go ahead and do the wrong thing,

they're all there in our heart. And they pile up. Those who don't seek forgiveness carry a host of burdens.

Guilt can weigh on us like heavy chains. Our lives, literally bound up in chains of guilt. Maybe today I've described the condition of somebody here in this room. I want you to know - Mother Goose was wrong. The king is able to put people back together again. God does not want you to go on living like this. God wants you to be free. In fact, God wants you to be free so much, He sent you a Savior, his only Son, Jesus the Christ.

In the Gospel lesson this morning we see how Jesus forgave the woman caught in adultery. The Pharisees were ready to stone her to death. She broke the law and she deserved her punishment. First Jesus asked the accusers to throw the first stone – IF they were free from sin. No one did.

And then, remember his words to the woman: "Woman, where are you accusers? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she replies. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. Go now, and change the way you live. Leave your life of sin."

Do you know what the King did for her? He did what all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't do. He helped this fragile woman begin to put her life together again. He gave back her dignity. He restored her self-respect. He forgave her of her sins. And He gave her a new chance at life. That's what Jesus does for all of us.

Listen again to what Paul says in chapter 8 of Romans: "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." That's good news. That's not good news, that's great news! There is no condemnation. Jesus has set us free from all the guilt we've been carrying around.

We can stop beating ourselves over the head. We can be free from

guilt we've been carrying around. We can stop telling ourselves we're no good, that we're not enough, that we haven't measured up. We can be free from the guilt that has shackled our lives for so long, and that has taken away much of the joy of living.

But for many Christians, you've heard this message before. And it's still too good to be true, too hard to believe. You think this message is for someone else, but not for you, that somehow what you've done is too bad for God to forgive you.

For many people, they still hold on to this idea that we have to be good enough for God to love us and forgive us. We know with our heads that we can't earn salvation, but in our hearts, we still want to try.

Let me put it to you this way. Do you have to wash up before you take a bath? Or put it another way, do you have to cure yourself before you go to the doctor to ask for help? It sounds ridiculous but that is the way many people approach God. We try to cure ourselves before we see the doctor who heals and forgives all sin.

Hear these words, my friends: God is more ready to forgive and to accept us than we are willing to forgive and accept ourselves. I would remind you again of what Paul said in Romans 8: "There is no condemnation; we have been set free." If God forgives us and accepts us, then we should forgive and accept ourselves – no matter what we've done. It is the pathway to freedom from the bondage of guilt and shame.

Today you may be carrying a burden of guilt. I invite you to confess it to our Heavenly Father, and then receive God's forgiveness. He is quick to forgive and slow to anger. God has already dealt with our sin. Accept the free gift of forgiveness, and know the joy of living in Christ. Mother Goose was wrong – the King can put us back together again. Amen? Amen!