

June 13, '10
Luke 5:1-11
VBS

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON
“THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO DUMBO”

EVERY YEAR ON VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL SUNDAY, WE REVERSE THE ORDER OF THE CHILDREN’S SERMON & THE SERMON.

WE NOT ONLY REVERSE THE ORDER – WE ALSO REVERSE THE LENGTH.

TODAY, THE SERMON WILL BE THE LENGTH OF A NORMAL CHILDREN’S SERMON & THE CHILDREN’S SERMON WILL BE THE LENGTH OF AN AVERAGE SERMON.

TODAY, OUR FOCUS WILL BE ON THE MOVIE “DUMBO.”

I TRUST ALL OF YOU HAVE SEEN IT AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER.

MANY OF YOU HAVE PROBABLY SEEN IT MULTIPLE TIMES.

“DUMBO” WAS MADE IN 1941 & IT WAS BOTH THE SHORTEST & LEAST EXPENSIVE OF ALL DISNEY FEATURE ANIMATED CLASSICS.

IT CAME ON THE HEELS OF TWO BOX OFFICE LOSERS – “PINOCCHIO” & “FANTASIA” & WALT DISNEY WAS HOPING TO RECOUP SOME OF HIS LOSSES WITH “DUMBO.”

IT WAS A ROUSING SUCCESS WHEN IT WAS RELEASED IN OCTOBER OF 1941 & TIME MAGAZINE EVEN PLANNED TO DO A COVER STORY ON IT THE FIRST WEEK IN DECEMBER.

BUT, OF COURSE, THE FIRST WEEK OF DECEMBER IN 1941 WAS THE BOMBING OF PEARL HARBOR & THAT OBVIOUSLY TOOK PRECEDENCE.

AS WITH MOST MOVIES – INCLUDING ANIMATED ONES – THERE ARE SOME INTERESTING THINGS THAT GO ON IN “DUMBO” THAT CAN ENHANCE YOUR UNDERSTANDING & APPRECIATION OF THE MOVIE.

LET ME JUST POINT OUT A FEW OF THEM.

THE MOVIE BEGINS AT NIGHT WITH CLOUDS & HEAVY RAIN - FORESHADOWING THE DARKNESS, CLOUDS & RAIN THAT DUMBO WILL HAVE TO WEATHER.

IT ALSO BEGINS WITH THE FLYING STORKS.

THE THEME OF FLYING IS SEEN FROM THE VERY OUTSET OF THE MOVIE.

THERE ARE TWO TIMES WHEN WE SEE DUMBO BEING BATHED OR WASHED – OR BAPTIZED - AS HE ENTERS A NEW PHASE OF HIS LIFE.

AT ONE POINT IN THE MOVIE, TIMOTHY THE MOUSE SAYS, “*YOU KNOW, LOTS OF PEOPLE WHO ARE FAMOUS HAVE BIG EARS.*”

AT THE TIME THE MOVIE WAS MADE, THIS WOULD HAVE BROUGHT GALES OF LAUGHTER FROM THE AUDIENCE AS AN OBVIOUS REFERENCE TO THE GREAT ACTOR, CLARK GABLE WHO WAS KNOWN FOR HIS UNUSUALLY LARGE EARS.

THERE ARE ALL SORTS OF LITTLE BACKGROUND TIDBITS ABOUT “DUMBO” THAT CAN ENHANCE OUR VIEWING PLEASURE.

BUT THEY AREN'T AT ALL NECESSARY TO APPRECIATE THE FILM.
YOU KNOW, IT'S THE SAME WAY WHEN READING THE BIBLE.
THERE ARE LOTS OF IMPORTANT & INTERESTING BITS OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT A
PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE THAT MIGHT ENHANCE OUR READING PLEASURE.
BUT THAT BACKGROUND INFORMATION ISN'T ESSENTIAL TO APPRECIATING WHAT WE READ.
LIKE A MOVIE – YOU CAN LOOK AS DEEPLY AS YOU LIKE AT A PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE.
OR, YOU CAN JUST TAKE IT AT FACE VALUE & ENJOY IT EVERY BIT AS MUCH.
THAT'S A WONDERFUL THING ABOUT MOVIES & A WONDERFUL THING ABOUT THE BIBLE. AMEN.

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“THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO DUMBO”

THIS MORNING I WANT TO TELL YOU ABOUT ONE OF MY FAVORITE MOVIES.
THE FIRST TIME I SAW THIS MOVIE I WAS JUST A LITTLE BIT YOUNGER THAN SOME OF YOU & JUST A
LITTLE BIT OLDER THAN SOME OF YOU.
AND WHEN I FIRST SAW IT, IT HAD ALREADY BEEN AROUND FOR A LONG TIME!
THAT TELLS YOU THAT THIS MOVIE IS VERY OLD.
IN FACT, IT'S PROBABLY OLDER THAN SOME OF YOUR GRANDPARENTS ARE!
BUT IT'S A MOVIE THAT HAS THINGS TO TEACH US THAT ARE EVEN OLDER THAN THAT.
THE THINGS IT HAS TO TEACH US GO ALL THE WAY BACK TO THE BIBLE.
THE MOVIE IS “DUMBO” AND THE LESSONS ARE – WELL, LET'S JUST HEAR THE STORY & SEE WHAT THOSE
LESSONS ARE.
WE MIGHT EVEN FIND THAT SOME OF THOSE LESSONS ARE LESSONS WE LEARNED IN VACATION BIBLE
SCHOOL THIS WEEK.
“DUMBO” BEGINS WITH A FLOCK OF STORKS CARRYING NEW BABIES TO A CIRCUS.
NOW WE KNOW THAT STORKS DON'T REALLY BRING BABIES – UNLESS IT'S A BABY STORK.
BUT THAT'S A LESSON FOR ANOTHER TIME.
IN OUR STORY, THERE ARE NEW BABY BEARS, KANGAROOS, HIPPOPOTAMUSES, TIGERS & GIRAFFES.
BUT THERE'S ONE ANIMAL WAITING FOR A NEW BABY THAT DOESN'T GET ONE.
IT'S MRS. JUMBO – THE ELEPHANT.
SHE'S SO SAD THAT NO BABY HAS BEEN DELIVERED TO HER.
BUT THE NEXT DAY, ANOTHER STORK ARRIVES.

MAYBE IT WAS RUNNING LATE BECAUSE THE BABY IT CARRIED WAS JUST SO HEAVY THAT IT TOOK LONGER TO GET THERE.

WELL, A BABY ELEPHANT IS DELIVERED TO MRS. JUMBO & ALL THE OTHER ELEPHANTS ARE SO EXCITED TO SEE HER NEW BABY.

HE'S AS CUTE AS HE CAN BE & THEY OOO & AHHH OVER HIM.

BUT THEN – HE SNEEZES & OUT FLAP TWO HUGE, ENORMOUS, GIGANTIC, COLOSSAL EARS!

ALL THE OTHER ELEPHANTS GASP!

NOW, IF YOU'VE EVER SEEN AN ELEPHANT, YOU KNOW THEY HAVE REALLY, REALLY BIG EARS!

SO IF *THIS* BABY ELEPHANT COULD MAKE OTHER ELEPHANTS GASP OVER THE SIZE OF HIS EARS, YOU KNOW THEY HAD TO BE MIGHTY BIG!

SUDDENLY, THE OOO'S & AHHH'S OF THE ELEPHANTS CHANGE VERY QUICKLY TO OOO'S & UGGHHH'S.

ONE OF THEM WHISPERS TO ANOTHER – “*JUST TAKE A LOOK AT THOSE (AND SHE CAN'T EVEN BRING HERSELF TO SAY THE WORD & SO SHE SPELLS IT) E-A-R-S!*”

THAT SPELLS “EARS” FOR THOSE OF YOU CAN'T SPELL YET.

THEY ALL BEGIN TO LAUGH AT HIM & ONE OF THEM EVEN DECIDES THAT HE SHOULD BE CALLED – NOT “JUMBO, JUNIOR” AS HIS MOTHER NAMED HIM – BUT “DUMBO.”

LATER, AS THE CIRCUS ROLLS INTO A NEW TOWN & DUMBO HAS HIS FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH PEOPLE, HE FINDS THE SAME THING.

A GROUP OF BOYS LOOKS AT HIM & LAUGHS.

ONE OF THEM SAYS, “*ISN'T THAT THE FUNNIEST THING YOU EVER SAW?!*”

LATER ON, ONE OF THE ELEPHANTS SAYS, “*IT'S ALL THE FAULT OF THAT LITTLE F-R-E-A-K.*”

THAT SPELLS “FREAK.”

ANOTHER ONE SAID, “*WELL FRANKLY, I WOULDN'T EAT AT THE SAME BALE OF HAY WITH HIM.*”

AND STILL ANOTHER SAID, “*HERE HE COMES NOW. PRETEND YOU DON'T SEE HIM.*”

PEOPLE SOMETIMES SAY MEAN THINGS.

AND SOMETIMES PEOPLE WHO WOULDN'T USUALLY SAY MEAN THINGS WILL DO IT JUST BECAUSE EVERYONE ELSE IS DOING IT.

WE NEED TO ALWAYS BE CAREFUL OF THAT.

WE NEED TO LEARN TO FOLLOW THOSE WHO TREAT OTHER PEOPLE WITH LOVE & KINDNESS – NOT THOSE WHO SAY MEAN & UGLY THINGS.

I THINK “FOLLOW” WAS ONE OF OUR WORDS IN VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL THIS WEEK, WASN'T IT?

WE NEED TO FOLLOW PEOPLE WHO WILL SHOW US THE RIGHT PLACES TO GO & THE RIGHT WAY TO BEHAVE.

IF YOU BECOME FRIENDS WITH KIDS WHO DO MEAN & NASTY THINGS, YOU'LL FIND THAT YOU FOLLOW THEM & *YOU* START DOING MEAN & NASTY THINGS.

BUT IF YOU'RE FRIENDS ARE PEOPLE WHO ARE KIND & LOVING & FOLLOW *THEM*, THAT'S THE WAY YOU'LL BE, TOO.

OKAY, BACK TO THE STORY AGAIN.

AS YOU MIGHT IMAGINE, MRS. JUMBO WASN'T GOING TO STAND BY QUIETLY & WATCH OTHERS MAKE FUN OF HER LITTLE DUMBO .

SHE PUT UP QUITE A FUSS.

IN FACT, SHE PUT UP SUCH A FUSS THAT SHE WAS CHAINED UP & THROWN IN THE CIRCUS JAIL.

THEY PUT A SIGN ON IT THAT SAID "MAD ELEPHANT."

I THINK THAT'S AN INTERESTING SIGN BECAUSE "MAD" HAS 2 MEANINGS.

IT CAN MEAN EITHER "CRAZY" OR IT CAN MEAN "ANGRY."

THE CIRCUS PEOPLE MEANT IT THE FIRST WAY.

THEY ACTED LIKE MRS. JUMBO WAS CRAZY.

BUT, REALLY, MRS. JUMBO WAS JUST ANGRY – AS WELL SHE SHOULD HAVE BEEN WITH EVERYONE MAKING FUN OF HER LITTLE DUMBO.

IN DUMBO'S FIRST ACT IN THE CIRCUS, HE'S SUPPOSED TO END UP AT THE VERY TOP OF AN ELEPHANT PYRAMID.

IT DOESN'T WORK, THOUGH, BECAUSE HE TRIPS OVER HIS EARS & ALL THE ELEPHANTS COME TUMBLING DOWN.

DUMBO IS REDUCED TO PERFORMING WITH THE CLOWNS.

THEY DRESS HIM UP LIKE A LITTLE BABY, PUT HIM IN THE TOP OF A BURNING HOUSE & HE HAS TO JUMP OUT A WINDOW INTO A HUGE TUB OF WATER.

WELL, AFTERWARDS THE CLOWNS ARE VERY EXCITED ABOUT WHAT A HUGE HIT THEIR ACT WAS & THEY DECIDE TO MAKE IT EVEN BIGGER.

THEY DECIDE THAT IF PEOPLE WERE EXCITED ABOUT AN ELEPHANT JUMPING 20 FEET INTO A TUB OF WATER, THEY'D BE TWICE AS EXCITED IF IT WERE 40 FEET.

AND THEN SOMEONE SUGGESTS 80 FEET, SOMEONE ELSE A HUNDRED & EIGHTY, THEN 300 & FINALLY THEY DECIDE THEY'LL HAVE DUMBO JUMP A THOUSAND FEET INTO A TUB OF WATER.

WELL – ONE OF THE CLOWNS – AND THIS IS REALLY INTERESTING – SAYS, "*HEY, BE CAREFUL. YOU'LL HURT THE LITTLE GUY.*"

AND ONE OF THE OTHER CLOWNS SAYS, "*AW, GO ON! ELEPHANTS AIN'T GOT NO FEELINGS. THEY'RE MADE OF RUBBER.*"

NOW THE WORST PART OF ALL THAT ISN'T THE FACT THAT HE USED THE WORD "AIN'T" WHICH ISN'T REALLY A WORD.

THE WORST PART OF THAT IS THAT HE SUGGESTED YOU CAN DO ANYTHING AT ALL TO SOMEONE YOU DON'T LIKE OR SOMEONE WHO'S DIFFERENT BECAUSE THEY DON'T HAVE FEELINGS ANYWAY.

YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT TRUE, DON'T YOU?

EVERYONE HAS FEELINGS & EVERYONE CAN HAVE THEIR FEELINGS HURT AS WELL AS THEY CAN HAVE THEIR BODY HURT.

YOU SHOULD MAKE SURE YOU NEVER DO ANYTHING TO HURT SOMEONE'S FEELINGS.

WELL, IN THE MEANTIME, THERE'S BEEN ONE – AND ONLY ONE- PERSON (OR CREATURE) WHO HAS BEEN HELPFUL TO DUMBO.

IT'S A LITTLE MOUSE NAMED TIMOTHY.

WE'LL TALK A LITTLE MORE ABOUT HIM LATER, BUT WHEN DUMBO IS AT THE LOWEST POINT OF HIS LIFE, TIMOTHY TAKES DUMBO TO SEE HIS MOTHER.

HE KNOWS THIS WILL CHEER HIM UP & HE'S RIGHT.

IN ONE OF THE MOST MOVING SCENES IN ANY MOVIE – CARTOON OR OTHERWISE – MRS. JUMBO REACHES HER TRUNK OUT OF HER PRISON CELL & CRADLES HER LITTLE BABY WHILE SHE SINGS A BEAUTIFUL SONG, “BABY MINE.”

MRS. JUMBO LOVES HER LITTLE DUMBO & IT BREAKS HER HEART NOT TO BE WITH HIM.

THE ONLY REASON SHE'S NOT IS BECAUSE SHE *DOES* LOVE HIM & DID EVERYTHING SHE COULD TO PROTECT HIM.

THAT'S WHAT YOUR MOM & DAD & YOUR BIG BROTHERS & SISTERS & YOUR AUNTS & UNCLES & YOUR GRANDPARENTS & YOUR TEACHERS IN SCHOOL & YOUR TEACHERS IN CHURCH & YOUR PASTOR WILL DO FOR YOU.

WE LOVE YOU & WILL ALWAYS DO EVERYTHING WE CAN TO PROTECT YOU & KEEP YOU SAFE.

“LOVE,” LIKE “FOLLOW,” IS ANOTHER ONE OF THE WORDS WE LEARNED AT VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL THIS WEEK.

WE LEARN HOW TO LOVE OTHERS BECAUSE GOD FIRST LOVED US.

WELL, BACK TO OUR STORY.

AFTER A VERY STRANGE NIGHT, DUMBO & TIMOTHY FIND THEMSELVES UP A TREE – LITERALLY.

THEY'RE AWAKENED FROM A DEEP SLEEP BY A BUNCH OF BIRDS WHO FIND THEM MYSTERIOUSLY PERCHED HIGH IN THE BRANCH OF A TREE.

THEY HAVE NO IDEA HOW THEY GOT THERE.

THE ONLY THING TIMOTHY CAN FIGURE OUT IS THAT DUMBO FLEW THEM UP THERE.

AT FIRST, THE BIRDS SEEM TO BE LAUGHING AT DUMBO BUT WHEN THEY SEE THAT HE NEEDS SOMEONE TO CARE FOR HIM, THAT'S WHAT THEY DO.

THEY CARE.

THEY *CARE* ABOUT HIM & THEY CARE *FOR* HIM.

THEY SHOW HIM THAT HE REALLY MATTERS TO THEM.

THEY LIKE HIM & THEY WANT TO HELP HIM.

THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS TO CARE FOR SOMEONE.

IT MEANS YOU'LL TRY, IN WHATEVER WAY YOU CAN, TO HELP SOMEONE IN NEED.

“CARE” – LIKE “FOLLOW” & “LOVE” - WAS ANOTHER IMPORTANT WORD WE LEARNED THIS WEEK.

THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO CARE FOR YOU & YOU SHOULD ALWAYS TRY TO CARE FOR OTHERS AS WELL.

BACK TO OUR STORY AGAIN.

THE BIRDS REALLY BELIEVE THAT DUMBO CAN FLY BUT THEY KNOW THAT HE DOESN'T BELIEVE IT HIMSELF.

SO THEY GIVE TIMOTHY AN IDEA.

THEY TELL TIMOTHY TO TELL DUMBO THAT IF HE CARRIES A MAGIC FEATHER WITH HIM, HE'LL BE ABLE TO FLY.

TIMOTHY GIVES DUMBO THE MAGIC FEATHER AND, SURE ENOUGH, IT WORKS.

AFTER A LITTLE COACHING & COAXING FROM THE BIRDS, DUMBO JUMPS OFF THE TOP OF A MOUNTAIN & SOARS THROUGH THE AIR!

HE & TIMOTHY THEN MARCH BACK TO THE CIRCUS – READY TO MAKE THAT IMPOSSIBLE ONE THOUSAND FOOT JUMP & SHOW EVERYONE THAT DUMBO CAN REALLY FLY.

THEY GET TO THE TOP OF THE HUGE BURNING HOUSE & WHEN IT'S TIME TO JUMP, TIMOTHY CLIMBS INTO DUMBO'S HAT & SAYS, *“OKAY, CONTACT. TAKE OFF.”*

AND THERE THEY GO – DIVING OUT OF A WINDOW A THOUSAND FEET IN THE AIR.

THE SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON THEM & THEY MOVE CLOSER & CLOSER TO THE GROUND.

SUDDENLY, THE MAGIC FEATHER FLIES OUT OF DUMBO'S TRUNK.

TIMOTHY SCREAMS, *“UH-OH! THE MAGIC FEATHER!”*

HE QUICKLY SLIDES DOWN DUMBO'S TRUNK & YELLS, *“COME ON, DUMBO! FLY! OPEN THEM EARS!”*

THEY MOVE CLOSER & CLOSER TO THE GROUND.

TIMOTHY SAYS, *“THE MAGIC FEATHER WAS JUST A GAG! YOU CAN FLY! HONEST YOU CAN! HURRY! OPEN 'EM UP! PLEASE!”*

HERE'S WHERE ANOTHER ONE OF OUR WORDS FROM THIS WEEK COMES IN – FROM THE VERY FIRST DAY OF VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL.

THE WORD IS “TRUST.”

DUMBO HAD TO LEARN TO “TRUST” TIMOTHY.

TIMOTHY WAS THE ONE PERSON – OR ONE CREATURE – WHO WAS ALWAYS LOOKING OUT FOR DUMBO.

WHEN THE OTHER ELEPHANTS LAUGHED AT DUMBO'S EARS, IT WAS TIMOTHY WHO SAID, *“WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH HIS EARS? I DON'T SEE NOTHIN' WRONG WITH 'EM. I THINK THEY'RE CUTE.”*

WHEN HE SAW DUMBO AT HIS LOWEST POINT, HE SAID, *“THERE HE GOES...POOR LITTLE GUY – WITHOUT A FRIEND IN THE WOILD. NOBODY TO TURN TO – OH, I'LL DO SOMETHING ABOUT THIS.”*

YOU SEE, TIMOTHY REALIZED THAT IF DUMBO DIDN'T HAVE ANY FRIENDS, SOMEONE TO *BE* HIS FRIEND & HE DECIDED IT MIGHT AS WELL BE HIM.

AND HE STOOD UP TALL – WELL, AS TALL AS A MOUSE CAN STAND – AND SET OUT TO BE DUMBO'S FRIEND. TIMOTHY WAS THE KIND OF FRIEND DUMBO COULD TRUST.

AND SO, WHEN HE TOLD DUMBO HE REALLY COULD FLY, DUMBO TRUSTED HIM.

YOU NEED TO LEARN WHO YOU CAN TRUST & YOU NEED TO LEARN THAT YOU CAN ALWAYS TRUST GOD BECAUSE GOD ALWAYS KEEPS PROMISES.

OKAY – BACK TO THE STORY.

AS THEY WERE RACING TOWARD THE GROUND – JUST INCHES FROM CRASHING INTO THE NET THAT COULDN'T POSSIBLY BREAK THEIR FALL, DUMBO OPENS HIS EARS & OFF THEY GO, INTO THE CROWD.

TIMOTHY SHOUTS, “*WHEE! WE DID IT! WE DID IT! LET'S SHOW 'EM, DUMBO! POWER DIVE! NOW LOOP DE LOOP! YOU'RE MAKIN' HISTORY!*”

AND, OF COURSE, DUMBO *DOES* MAKE HISTORY & ALL OVER THE WORLD, THE NEWSPAPER HEADLINES ANNOUNCE THE NEWS ABOUT “*DUMBO – THE FLYING ELEPHANT.*”

I TOLD YOU WHAT A GOOD FRIEND TIMOTHY WAS TO DUMBO & SOME OF THE THINGS HE SAID TO HIM.

THERE'S ONE MORE THING TIMOTHY SAID THAT I THINK IS VERY IMPORTANT – MAYBE THE MOST IMPORTANT LINE IN THE WHOLE MOVIE.

WHEN TIMOTHY IS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW THEY ENDED UP IN THE TREE WITH THE BIRDS & WHEN HE FINALLY GETS IT – HE SAYS, “*THE VERY THINGS THAT HELD YA' DOWN ARE GONNA CARRY YA' UP!*”

WOW! THAT SOUNDS LIKE IT'S STRAIGHT OUT OF THE BIBLE!

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO JOSEPH IN ONE OF THE STORIES WE HEARD THIS WEEK.

SOMETHING OTHERS MEANT FOR EVIL, GOD MEANT FOR GOOD.

AND JESUS HIMSELF SAID, “*BLESSED ARE THE POOR, BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE SAD, BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE HUNGRY.*”

IN YOUR OWN LIFE, GOD IS ABLE TO TAKE THE THINGS THAT HOLD YOU DOWN TO CARRY YOU UP.

DUMBO IS A WONDERFUL STORY WITH LOTS OF WONDERFUL LESSONS.

IT'S A STORY THAT ENDS LIKE ALL GOOD STORIES SHOULD – A STORY THAT ENDS LIKE YOUR OWN STORY WILL IF YOU LEARN THE LESSONS IT TEACHES – LESSONS ABOUT FOLLOWING, LOVING, CARING & TRUSTING.

YOU CAN BE LIKE DUMBO & HIS MOTHER & TIMOTHY WHO ALL “LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER.” AMEN.

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