

I Corinthians 13  
June 14, '09  
VBS Sunday

INTRODCUTION TO -  
"THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO CINDERELLA"

*(The first section is The Sermon – prior to The Children’s Sermon. On Vacation Bible School Sundays, we reverse the order & the length of the two. Following The Sermon is The Children’s Sermon – “The Gospel According to Cinderella.”)*

ONCE UPON A TIME –

THAT SOUNDS LIKE THE WAY FAIRY TALES BEGIN, DOESN’T IT?

WE’RE NOT QUITE READY TO START OUR FAIRY TALE, BUT WHAT I WANT TO TELL YOU FIRST ALSO BEGINS WITH “ONCE UPON A TIME...”

ONCE UPON A TIME, IN GERMANY NEARLY TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO, TWO BROTHERS LEFT LAW SCHOOL & SPENT MONTHS TRAVELING ABOUT THE COUNTRYSIDE IN SEARCH OF OLD FAIRY TALES.

JACOB & WILHELM GRIMM WERE INTRIGUED BY THE WONDERFUL STORIES OF CHILDHOOD THAT EVERYONE SEEMED TO KNOW, BUT THAT NO ONE HAD TAKEN TIME TO PUT INTO PRINT.

THE BROTHERS SPENT A GREAT DEAL OF TIME IN THE OLD TOWN OF KASSEL.

THERE THEY SAT & LISTENED AS MOTHERS & GRANDMOTHERS TOLD STORIES TO BOYS & GIRLS.

THEY SAT IN KITCHENS & BEDROOMS & GARDENS & HEARD “HANSEL & GRETEL,”

“RUMPELSTILTSKIN,” & “CINDERELLA.”

THEY WROTE ALL THESE STORIES DOWN & PUBLISHED GRIMM’S FAIRY TALES IN THE YEAR 1812.

IT WAS TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH IN 1824 & IS NOW, OF COURSE, A WORLD CLASSIC.

JACOB WAS A LANGUAGE SCHOLAR.

IN FACT, HE IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE MODERN-DAY SCIENCE OF LANGUAGE & ONE OF THE WORLD’S GREATEST LINGUISTS.

THE GERMAN DICTIONARY HE STARTED IN 1854 HAS BECOME A MODEL FOR ALL CONTEMPORARY DICTIONARIES.

BUT WHEN HE WASN’T HAVING FUN WITH LANGUAGE, JACOB BECAME VERY INTERESTED IN THE HISTORIES OF THOSE FAIRY TALES – HOW, WHERE & WHY THEY ORIGINATED.

THE ACCEPTED CONCLUSION AMONG MANY IS THAT THEIR ORIGIN IS IN GREEK & TEUTONIC MYTHS & YET, CERTAINLY THE BIBLE AND CHRISTIANITY HAVE ALSO PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE, AT LEAST IN THEIR SURVIVAL.

AS WE LOOK AT SO MANY FAIRY TALES, AN ELEMENT OF THE GOSPEL SLIPS THROUGH IN GLORIOUS GOODNESS.

I THINK WHEN CHILDREN HAVE A SOLID FOUNDATION IN THE BIBLE & TEACHINGS OF CHRISTIANITY, THEY LEARN HOW TO SEE THE GOSPEL ALL AROUND THEM – EVEN IN THEIR FAVORITE STORIES, MOVIES & TELEVISION SHOWS.

IT IS SO IMPORTANT FOR PARENTS & FOR THE REST OF US, TO HELP GIVE THEM THAT SOLID FOUNDATION.

AND IT'S IMPORTANT FOR US TO SHOW THEM THE RESPECT & THE LOVE THAT THEY DESERVE – RESPECT & LOVE THAT ARE SO EVIDENT IN THESE WORDS OF PAUL THAT WE'VE READ THIS MORNING.

WE SAY THAT CHILDREN ARE THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH.

I FEAR THAT WE SOMETIMES SAY THAT MUCH TOO FLIPPANTLY.

WE NEED TO BE SERIOUS WHEN WE SAY SUCH THINGS.

WE NEED TO SHOW THAT WE MEAN IT WITH OUR WORDS & OUR ACTIONS.

LET ME TELL YOU ONE VERY SIMPLE THING YOU CAN DO TO SHOW OUR CHILDREN YOU RESPECT THEM & LOVE THEM.

IT'S SOMETHING I ENCOURAGE YOU TO DO EVERY YEAR – AT LEAST ON VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL SUNDAY.

LEARN THEIR NAMES.

DON'T JUST LEARN THAT SO-AND-SO BELONGS TO SO-AND-SO.

LEARN A CHILD'S NAME & COMMIT IT TO YOUR MEMORY & GREET THAT CHILD BY NAME WHEN YOU SEE HIM OR HER.

IT'S A VERY SIMPLE THING – BUT IT MEANS SO MUCH TO A CHILD.

LIKE THEIR FAVORITE STORY OR MOVIE OR TELEVISION SHOW, YOU, TOO, CAN BE EVIDENCE OF THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST IN THEIR EVERYDAY LIFE. AMEN.

#### “THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO CINDERELLA”

“ONCE UPON A TIME...”

THAT'S THE WAY EVERY GOOD FAIRY TALE SHOULD BEGIN, ISN'T IT?

AND THAT'S HOW THE FAIRY TALE OF “CINDERELLA” BEGINS.

NOW I COULD TELL YOU THE REAL STORY OF CINDERELLA, BUT I'M NOT SURE YOU'D WANT TO HEAR IT.

IN THAT STORY, ONE OF CINDERELLA'S NASTY STEPSISTERS CUTS OFF HER TOE TRYING TO GET THE GLASS SLIPPER TO FIT & THE OTHER ONE CUTS OFF HER HEEL TRYING TO DO THE SAME THING.

AND AT THE END OF THE STORY, THE STEPSISTERS HAVE THEIR EYES PLUCKED OUT BY PIGEONS, MAKING THEM BLIND BECAUSE THEY WERE SO MEAN.

OOOOH! WE DON'T WANT TO HEAR THAT STORY, DO WE?

I THINK YOU'D RATHER HEAR THE DISNEY VERSION OF “CINDERELLA” & IT BEGINS – “*ONCE UPON A TIME IN A FARAWAY LAND, THERE WAS A TINY KINGDOM...*”

THAT'S HOW THE STORY BEGINS & IT'S A STORY ABOUT A MAN WHOSE WIFE HAD DIED.

HE HAD A DAUGHTER NAMED CINDERELLA.

THE MAN MARRIED ANOTHER WOMAN WHO WAS NOT VERY NICE TO CINDERELLA.

NOW THIS WOMAN HAD TWO DAUGHTERS HERSELF.  
THEIR NAMES WERE DRIZELLA & ANASTASIA & THEY ALSO WERE NOT VERY NICE TO CINDERELLA.  
AS THEY SAY, "THE APPLE DOESN'T FALL FAR FROM THE TREE."  
THEY MADE CINDERELLA DO ALL THE HOUSEWORK & THEY MADE HER SLEEP IN THE UGLY ATTIC.  
IT JUST SO HAPPENED THAT THE KING OF THE KINGDOM HAD A SON WHO WASN'T MARRIED.  
THE KING WANTED TO HAVE GRANDCHILDREN.  
HE WANTED, AS HE SAID, "*THE PITTER PATTER OF TINY FEET*" IN THE CASTLE ONCE AGAIN.  
SO HE ARRANGED TO HAVE A BIG BALL – NOT A BASKETBALL OR FOOTBALL – BUT A BIG PARTY FOR HIS SON SO THAT HE COULD FIND A YOUNG WOMAN WHO WOULD BE HIS WIFE.  
WHEN THE INVITATION WAS SENT, DRIZELLA & ANASTASIA WERE THRILLED AT THE THOUGHT OF GOING TO THE PALACE TO MEET THE PRINCE & PERHAPS BECOME HIS BRIDE.  
WELL, THERE WASN'T MUCH CHANCE OF THAT HAPPENING BECAUSE THEIR ATTITUDE WAS EVEN UGLIER THAN THEIR APPEARANCE.  
WHEN CINDERELLA HEARD OF THE INVITATION – THAT IT WAS FOR *ALL* THE GIRLS OF THE KINGDOM – SHE THOUGHT SHE WOULD BE ABLE TO GO AS WELL.  
BUT HER MEAN STEPMOTHER TOLD HER SHE COULDN'T GO BECAUSE SHE HAD TOO MUCH WORK TO DO & BECAUSE SHE DIDN'T HAVE A DRESS TO WEAR.  
IN A WONDERFUL SCENE IN THE MOVIE, CINDERELLA GOES RUNNING OUTSIDE IN TEARS.  
SHE RUNS INTO THE DARKNESS & YOU KNOW THAT HER LIFE IS VERY SAD & DARK AT THAT MOMENT.  
AND I THINK THAT WHAT CINDERELLA DOES IN THAT MOMENT CAN REMIND US OF ONE OF THE STORIES & ONE OF THE THEMES FROM VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL THIS WEEK.  
YOU REMEMBER THAT HANNAH WAS VERY SAD & THINGS WERE VERY DARK FOR HER & SHE PRAYED TO GOD.  
THAT'S WHAT CINDERELLA DID.  
SHE PRAYED FOR HELP.  
NOW, THE MOVIE DOESN'T TELL YOU THAT'S WHAT SHE WAS DOING, BUT WHEN YOU SEE CINDERELLA CRYING & KNEELING BY A BENCH IN THE GARDEN, YOU KNOW THAT SHE WAS PRAYING.  
THAT'S WHAT WE CAN ALWAYS DO WHEN WE NEED HELP.  
WE CAN ALWAYS TURN TO GOD IN PRAYER - IN ALL THE DARK TIMES OF LIFE.  
WELL, BACK TO CINDERELLA.  
OUT IN THE DARKNESS, SHE WAS FOUND BY HER FAIRY GODMOTHER AND AFTER A FEW MINOR MIRACLES, CINDERELLA WAS ON HER GLORIOUS WAY TO THE PRINCE'S BALL...A SCRUB GIRL DISGUISED AS A PRINCESS – OR IS IT THE OTHER WAY AROUND?

AT THE CASTLE, SHE DANCED IN THE PRINCE'S ARMS THE WHOLE NIGHT THROUGH.

BUT THEN CAME THE DREADED MOMENT – TIME RAN OUT!

THERE SHE STOOD – LOVING THE PRINCE, HATING THE CLOCK – RUNNING BACK TO HER REAL WORLD OF COOKING & CLEANING – FROM RAGS TO RICHES & THEN BACK AGAIN.

AS SHE RAN OFF, ONE OF HER GLASS SLIPPERS FELL FROM HER FOOT & THAT WAS THE ONLY THING – OTHER THAN HER HEART – THAT SHE LEFT BEHIND.

WORD FILTERS THROUGH THE KINGDOM THE NEXT DAY THAT THE PRINCE IS SEEKING THE BEAUTIFUL LADY WHO HAD WON HIS HEART THE NIGHT BEFORE – THE ONE WHOSE FOOT WILL FIT THE GLASS SLIPPER.

THE PRINCE WAS “SEEKING.”

DO YOU REMEMBER THAT WORD FROM BIBLE SCHOOL THIS WEEK?

SOME FRIENDS BROUGHT A PARALYZED MAN TO JESUS, SEEKING HIS HELP.

WE CAN ALWAYS GET HELP FROM JESUS IF WE SEEK TO FIND IT WITH ALL OUR HEART.

WELL, THE DUKE WHO WAS HELPING THE PRINCE CAME TO THE HOUSE WHERE CINDERELLA LIVED WITH HER EVIL STEPMOTHER & UGLY STEPSISTERS.

CINDERELLA, OF COURSE, KNEW THAT THE SLIPPER WOULD FIT HER FOOT.

SO DID HER FRIENDS, THE MICE.

THEY COULD HARDLY HOLD BACK THEIR EXCITEMENT AS THEY TRIED TO TELL THE DUKE THIS GOOD NEWS.

*TELL* THE GOOD NEWS IS WHAT THEY WANTED TO DO.

AND HERE'S ANOTHER BIBLE SCHOOL THEME.

REMEMBER WHAT HAPPENED WHEN JESUS HEALED A SICK WOMAN & RAISED A LITTLE GIRL FROM THE DEAD?

THE PEOPLE COULDN'T WAIT TO *TELL* THE GOOD NEWS TO OTHERS.

THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED WITH THE MICE.

THEY WANTED TO *TELL* THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT CINDERELLA.

WE SHOULD BE LIKE THAT.

WE SHOULD BE SO FILLED WITH EXCITEMENT ABOUT JESUS THAT WE CAN'T WAIT TO *TELL* OTHERS.

WELL, BACK TO THE STORY.

THE DUKE ASKED TO SEE ALL THE GIRLS IN THE HOUSE.

CINDERELLA'S STEPMOTHER HAD LOCKED HER IN THE ATTIC SO THAT ONLY ANASTASIA & DRIZELLA WOULD BE ABLE TO TRY ON THE SLIPPER.

OF COURSE IT DIDN'T FIT EITHER ONE OF THEM.

CINDERELLA CALLED OUT TO THE MICE & THE BIRDS & BRUNO THE DOG, ASKING THEM TO HELP HER.

IT WAS A TERRIBLE TIME FOR HER AND SHE ASKED FOR HELP.

HERE'S ANOTHER THEME.

REMEMBER ONE OF OUR STORIES THIS WEEK WHEN THE DISCIPLES WENT THROUGH A TERRIBLE TIME IN A BOAT WITH A FRIGHTENING STORM?

THEY, TOO, ASKED FOR HELP.

WE CAN ALWAYS ASK FOR HELP WHEN WE'RE IN NEED.

WE CAN TURN TO JESUS & HE'LL ALWAYS BE THERE.

ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS ASK.

WELL, THE MICE & THE BIRDS & BRUNO THE DOG ARE FINALLY ABLE TO HELP CINDERELLA ESCAPE THE ATTIC & SHE RUNS DOWNSTAIRS AND IT IS DISCOVERED THAT CINDERELLA IS THE ONE WHOSE FOOT FITS THE GLASS SLIPPER.

SHE'S THE ONE FOR WHOM THE PRINCE HAS BEEN SEARCHING.

EVERYONE IN THE KINGDOM *REJOICES* WITH THIS GOOD NEWS.

THEY *REJOICE* BECAUSE SOMETHING WONDERFUL HAS HAPPENED.

REMEMBER HOW MIRIAM LED THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL IN *REJOICING* WHEN SOMETHING WONDERFUL HAD HAPPENED?

WE NEED TO LEARN FROM MIRIAM & OPEN OUR EYES TO THE WONDERFUL WAYS IN WHICH GOD WORKS IN OUR LIVES.

WE, TOO, NEED TO REJOICE WITH GOD'S OVERWHELMING LOVE FOR US.

CINDERELLA & THE PRINCE GET MARRIED & JUST AS THE STORY BEGINS THE WAY ALL GOOD FAIRY TALES SHOULD BEGIN, IT ENDS AS THEY SHOULD END.

CINDERELLA & THE PRINCE "LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER."

NOW, BEFORE WE FINISH, I THINK WE CAN ASK A FEW QUESTIONS.

HOW ARE THINGS IN THE DARK, DREARY & DUSTY ATTIC OF YOUR LIFE?

HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE CINDERELLA?

HAVE YOU EVER FELT LIKE THE WHOLE WORLD WAS GOING TO A BALL WHILE YOU STAYED HOME TO MOP THE FLOORS?

NOW'S THE TIME TO RAISE A QUESTION THAT WE LIGHTLY TOUCHED ON BEFORE.

WAS CINDERELLA A PRINCESS IN RAGS OR A SCRUBGIRL WHO BECAME A PRINCESS?

THIS IS WHERE WE FIND THE REAL GOOD NEWS IN CINDERELLA'S GOSPEL FOR SHE WAS A PRINCESS IN RAGS – A PRINCESS CAMOUFLAGED AS A SCRUBGIRL – A PRINCESS FILLED WITH POTENTIAL JUST WAITING TO BE SET FREE.

JUST LIKE YOU!

WHEN OTHERS SEE YOU AS UNIMPORTANT, WHEN YOU SEE YOURSELF AS WORTHLESS, WHEN THE WORLD WOULD DISCARD YOU AS USELESS – JESUS LOOKS DEEP INTO YOUR SOUL & SEES A MARVELOUS PERSON OF BEAUTY, STRENGTH & GRACE.

HE SEES YOU & REACHES DOWN TO TRY THE SLIPPER ON YOUR FOOT.

AND WONDER OF WONDERS, IT FITS!

IT FITS BECAUSE YOU WERE THE ONE FOR WHOM HE WAS SEARCHING & SUDDENLY YOUR LIFE IS CHANGED.

I'M AFRAID MOST OF US SEE OURSELVES IN THE SCRUB ROLE – WASTING AWAY IN DARK ATTICS, REFUSING TO STEP OUT & EXERT OURSELVES, AFRAID TO BREAK OUT OF OUR SHELL & BE THE PERSON WE WERE MEANT TO BE.

THERE'S A WHOLE KINGDOM OUT THERE JUST WAITING FOR THE PERSON WHO WILL ALLOW JESUS CHRIST TO SET THEM FREE.

HE SEES A PRINCESS IN EVERY SCRUBGIRL – A PRINCE IN EVERY SCRUBGUY.

WHEN YOU THINK OF VBS THIS WEEK, THINK OF THE STRAP ON THAT GLASS SLIPPER.

(I KNOW...IT DIDN'T HAVE A STRAP BUT PRETEND THAT IT DID BECAUSE IT WILL HELP YOU REMEMBER THE LESSONS WE LEARNED THIS WEEK – THOSE OF YOU WHO CAN SPELL)

SEEK...TELL...REJOICE...ASK...PRAY.

S – T – R – A – P.

LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF JESUS AS HE REACHES OUT TO YOU WITH THAT GLASS SLIPPER & SAYS, "TRY IT ON FOR IT'S YOUR TURN FOR NEW LIFE." AMEN.

*The Reverend Dr. Dennis R. Davenport  
Eastminster Presbyterian Church  
Evansville, Indiana*