

Easter: 04 April 2021

‘Once upon a time...’. This is how fairy tales begin. Fairy tales are wonderful stories, “ripping yarns.” There is always a hero, villains, and conflict; deception and betrayal; daring deeds and narrow escapes; there is always a ‘moment of truth’ in which the hero is tested, is in desperate danger of failing, but finally triumphs; there is always a happy ending.

Everyone knows what a fairy tale is. There is something “fairy-tale-ish” about fairy tales. Traditionally fairy tales were for moral instruction: the heroes are admirable, even if they have glaring weaknesses; the villains are malevolent, even if beautiful, powerful, and smart. Fairy tales comfort us. They tell us we live in a dangerous world but like the hero, with determination, a worthy goal, and a little luck we will be all right. When the crisis comes, we too will triumph in the end. Yet for all that, fairy tales are easily dismissed. If the story or its ‘moral’ does not appeal—no worries, there are plenty of other stories to satisfy us.

Is Jesus a fairy tale? Many treat the Gospels as such, placing it with Snow White and Pinocchio, especially those ignorant of the actual content of the Gospels. Just one more fairy tale to take or leave as you like. Some consider Christianity a story to comfort but of little practical use in the hurly-burly of the ‘real’ world.

The Good News of Jesus Christ is not a fairy tale. There is no ‘once upon a time’ because Jesus is for all time, every-time, today. This is the reason John begins his Gospel with a hymn to the pre-existent Word, begotten in God before time, with God, being God for all time. There is no ‘they lived happily ever after’ because there is no end to God’s loving-kind mercy for all poured out through Jesus. In the Gospels Jesus tells his followers they will be even more reviled than he and, he will be with us to the end of the age. This cannot be spun as riding off into the sunset.

Unlike fairy tales we are not just to admire the hero, we are to “believe in”—that is, offer one’s life to Jesus and thereby become ever more like him in our daily lives, in all our relationships and environments.

We believe in Jesus through love and obedience: love is yearning for the One who promises to make whole all that is broken, who promises that despite the wreckage of our lives grace will, day by day, triumph over every evil. It is not willpower that brings us into the Kingdom of God but humility: letting go of self-sufficiency to the One in whom *...all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things...by making peace through the blood of the cross.* (Colossians 1:19-20)

The action of love is obedience. The greatest roadblock to faith is not disbelief as such, but pride. Pride tells us: I will control my conversion; I will decide what is right and wrong; I will ignore the unappealing, uncomfortable responsibilities of following Jesus. Obedience to Jesus as he is revealed in the Scriptures, in the Creed, in Tradition and in one’s life, speeds us on the path to resurrection, our resurrection. Jesus is not a fairytale. Faith is when conversion to Jesus, by Jesus, and in Jesus, becomes our story. So that with Paul we boldly proclaim: *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me* (Galatians 2:20).

Lord Jesus, crucified, Resurrected Lamb of God: live in us and through us; help us to so love and obey you, that in us your glory is revealed, your love shared, your salvation known.

Blessing and honor, thanksgiving and praise, more than we can offer, more than we can conceive, be yours, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, by all angels, all mortals, all creatures, for ever and ever. Amen.