

The Parable of the King's Horse

A Parable on Proclaiming the Gospel of Salvation in Christ

by

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written for spoken delivery:

Once upon a time, there was a good and powerful King who ruled a great land, as far as the eye could see. Though the King had many fine things, there was one thing he loved more than any other, and that was his horse. He had raised the horse from a colt and it had grown beautiful and strong. It galloped freely over the hills and pastures of the King's land.

Well, one day, the horse was wandering on its own near the boundaries of the King's pastures. Seeing the green grass beyond, it leaped the protective fence and landed squarely on the soft ground on the other side. As the horse moved to set out across this new land, it found that it was unable to move its feet. It appeared as though the soft ground on this side of the fence was far softer than the horse had anticipated. In fact, before the horse realized what it had gotten itself into, it was sinking in a mire of thick mud and could not get itself free.

It wasn't long before the King found out that his horse was gone, so he sent his servants out to look for it. The King was very distressed when the servants returned and told him that his beloved horse was trapped in the muddy mire. He was so upset, that the entire Kingdom shared his anguish.

The King's servants knew they had to act and act fast, because with every passing minute, the horse was sinking deeper in the mire. So they set about their plans on how to free it.

One servant said, "I have an idea." And he went to the edge of the mire and began to yell at the horse, threatening it and warning it of the impending dangers it faced. He was thinking to himself, "If the horse only knew what trouble it was in, surely it would come right out." So he screamed about the terrors of quick-sand, and how the mire would soon engulf the horse and suffocate it in a cruel and painful death.

And as he continued to shout these threats and warnings, it appeared as though his plan was starting to work. The horse's eyes grew wide with fright and frantically it began to struggle with all its might. But alas, all the struggling only made it sink deeper into the mire.

Then a second servant came forward. "No, no, no," she said, "enough with your crude tactics, you have it all wrong. Can't you see that you're only making things worse? We shouldn't frighten the horse; we should **reason** with it. Then it will be able to calmly make a decision on what it must do to get itself free."

And so this second servant began to reason with the horse. Calmly and carefully, she described the various differences in certain types of soil, with respect to density and saturation; she explained the principles of buoyancy and mass displacement, and discussed several other important matters. And as she did, the horse did indeed start to calm down, in fact, its eyelids actually drooped on a few occasions. But other than that, all the horse could do was look to the dry land then back again at the mire. It was unable to free its limbs from the mire that held them bound.

So yet a third servant came forward, saying, "This isn't going to work. Turning to the first servant, he said, "You're too negative." And to the second, he said, "You're too boring." Then he began to tell them his own idea. He said, "We've got to be more positive. What we have to do is provide the horse with an incentive."

So pulling some sugar cubes from his pocket, he held them out before the horse, in order to entice it, saying, "Look here, my pretty. Look what I have for you. You're such a beautiful little horsey. Come here, look at what I will give you. And there's a lot more where these came from." Well, the horse did look longingly at the sugar in the man's hand, but try as it might, it could not move any nearer than before.

Now a fourth servant shook her head in disgust, saying, "You people are so stupid. Can't you see that the horse is stuck in the mud? This isn't the time for words, its the time for action. We've got to give the horse something to do to get itself free."

And going to the very edge of the mire, she tossed a stout rope to the horse and said, "Go ahead, here is a rope. I've tied the other end to that big tree over there. All you need do is grab on and pull yourself out. Come on, it's all up to you now!" Well, the horse clamped on with its mouth and pulled with all its strength. But the horse was so firmly stuck in the mud that the rope slipped through its teeth every time its weight was applied.

Disgusted by the horse's failure, the servants were searching their minds for more ideas on what the horse could do to free itself, when all of a sudden, they heard the whinny of another horse, coming over the hill from the castle. There, riding on the horse was the Prince of the Kingdom, the King's only begotten son.

As the Prince's horse approached with speed, the other horse was still sinking deeper and deeper. But news of the Prince's arrival, seemed to give them all new hope.

And not without reason, for the Prince rode directly to the edge of the mire, and looked into the eyes of the horse who was bound. In a firm and steady voice he spoke to the horse, saying, "I will save you." And with that, he leaped over the fence and into the mire, not even stopping to take off his robe or crown. The Prince waded through the mud until he was behind the horse, and setting his shoulder against its back-side, he pushed and pushed with all his might.

It was only then that the horse started to budge and it finally began to emerge from the mire. With each push the horse rose higher and higher above the mud -- until at last, the horse was free. But at the same time, with each push, the Prince himself had sunk deeper and deeper into the mire, so by the time the horse was safe on solid ground, all that could be seen of the prince was his crown, disappearing below the surface of the mire.

The Prince had given his life for the King's beloved horse, and his sacrifice was just as much an act of love toward his Father as it was for the horse he died to free.

Now, this is place in a story where you would expect to hear "The End." But those who know this story know that this is not the end ... Amen