

THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

MATTHEW 7:24-27

A SERMON FOR EASTERTIDE
SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2015
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
MARIANNA, FLORIDA
TED W. LAND, INTERIM PASTOR

For my last couple of months with you, I am abandoning the Lectionary lessons for the Christian Year, and just preaching some of my favorite sermons from years go by. I hadn't planned on writing any new sermons, just using those I've treasured over the years.

But you know, God has a sense of humor. After I had decided to preach what has been called "the three little pigs sermon", I discovered that it has been so long since I've preached it that it isn't in my computer! And the only copy of it is in the bound copies of my sermons in the Arcadia church's library, and someone would have had to go through lots of years to find it.

I really don't remember whether I preached the three little pigs sermon for the first time in Arcadia. I may have preached it more than 35 years ago, in Leland, Mississippi. But I know I preached it twice in Arcadia, because when I was baptizing the youngest child in a family that had moved away and then came back for the baptism of their baby daughter, their little boy, Darren, asked if I would preach it that Sunday, and so I did.

Sometime in the distant past, I wrote a sermon called "The Little Bo Peep Theory of Evangelism". That sermon was my first to appear in print, and it still gets circulated every once in a while. I should have left it for Joe Busby to preach last Sunday, because the texts he used would fit that sermon.

The point of that sermon was that the Good Shepherd does NOT practice the little Bo Peep theory of evangelism, which is "Leave them alone and they'll come home." The Good Shepherd goes out in search of the lost sheep.

Why in the world the ending of the Sermon on the Mount, and that is our text this morning, should remind me of the three little pigs is lost in memory.

The story Jesus told, the parable that ends the greatest collection of His teaching, is of two men who built houses, one on the solid rock, the other on shifting sand. We know about building on shifting sand in Florida. There are plenty of people making a living reinforcing foundations, leveling houses, repairing cracks. We know about houses that when the floods came, washed away, and about houses that when the wind blew, it fell down.

The house built on solid rock will stand. In the Middle East, the sand was in the floodplains, the rock above it, and so a house built on the rock was impervious to the rain, the floods, even the winds.

There are a couple of great hymns of the church that reflect this teaching. One is "on Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand." The other is "How Firm a Foundation Ye Saints of the Lord, is laid for your faith in His excellent word."

But what about the Three Little Pigs? Remember the story? My mother read it to me when I was a child, and this is the way I remember it.

Once upon a time there were three little pigs.

One day they set out from the farm where they had been born. They were going out into the world to start new lives and enjoy any adventures that might come their way.

The first little pig met a man carrying some straw, and he asked him if he might have some to build himself a house.

“Of course, little pig,” said the man. He gave the little pig a big bundle of straw, and the little pig built himself a lovely house of golden straw.

A big bad wolf lived nearby. He came along and saw the new house and, feeling rather hungry and thinking he would like to eat a little pig for supper, he called out, “Little pig, little pig, let me come in.” To which the little pig replied, “No, no, by the hair of my chinny chin chin, I’ll not let you in!” So the wolf shouted very crossly, “Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff, till I blow your house in!”

And he huffed and he puffed, and he HUFFED and he PUFFED until the house of straw fell in, and the wolf ate the little pig for his supper that evening.

The second little pig was walking along the road when he met a man with a load of wood. “Please Sir,” he said, “can you let me have some of that wood so that I can build a house?”

“Of course,” said the man, and he gave him a big pile of wood. In no time at all, the little pig had built himself a lovely house. The next evening, along came the same wolf.

When he saw another little pig, this time in a wooden house, he called out, “Little pig, little pig, let me come in.” To which the pig replied, “No, no, by the hair of my chinny chin chin, I’ll not let you in!” So the wolf shouted, “Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff, till I blow your house in!”

And he huffed and he puffed and he HUFFED and he PUFFED until the house fell in and the wolf gobbled up the little pig for his supper.

The third little pig met a man with a cartload of bricks. “Please Sir, can I have some bricks to build myself a house?” he asked, and when the man had given him some, he built himself a lovely house with the bricks.

The big bad wolf came along, and licked his lips as he thought about the third little pig. He called out, “Little pig, little pig, let me come in!” And the little pig called back, “No, no, by the hair of my chinny chin chin, I’ll not let you in!” So the wolf shouted, “Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff, Till I blow your house in!”

And the wolf huffed and he puffed, and he HUFFED and he PUFFED, and he HUFFED again and PUFFED again, but still the house, which had been so well built with bricks, did The Three Little Pigs not blow in, no matter how hard the wolf tried.

The wolf went away to think how he could trick the little pig, and he came back and called through the window of the brick house, “Little pig, there are some marvelous turnips in the farmer’s field. Shall we go there tomorrow morning at six o’clock and get some?”

The little pig thought this was a very good idea, as he was very fond of turnips, but he went at five o’clock, not six o’clock, and collected all the turnips he needed before the wolf arrived.

The wolf was furious, but he thought he would try another trick. He told the little pig about the apples in the farmer’s orchard, and suggested they both went to get some at five o’clock the next morning. The little pig agreed, and went as before, an hour earlier. But this time the wolf came early too, and arrived while the little pig was still in the apple tree. The little pig pretended to be pleased to see him and threw an apple down to the wolf. While the wolf was picking it up, the little pig jumped down the tree and got into a barrel. He rolled quickly down the hill inside this barrel to his house of bricks and rushed in and bolted the door.

The wolf was very angry that the little pig had got the better of him again, and chased him in the barrel back to his house. When he got there he climbed on to the roof, intending to come down the chimney and catch the little pig that way. The little pig was waiting for him, however, with a large cauldron of boiling water on the fire. The wolf came down the chimney and fell into the cauldron with a big SPLASH, and the little pig quickly put the lid on it.

The wicked wolf was never seen again, and the little pig lived happily in his brick house for many many years.

What does that have to do with the Gospel?

Just this: the word of God is rock solid. One can build one's house of faith out of the straw of culture, or out of the wood of philosophy, but when the wolf of hard times comes and huffs and puffs, it will blow your house down. Only the house built of solid bricks of the word of God will stand.

And it is a smart little pig that has learned that lesson.

But just because you live in a house of solid faith, doesn't mean that the wolf will leave you alone. The wolf is always on the prowl, looking for little pigs to devour. The wolf may be named Satan, or the wolf may be named addictions, or the wolf may be named lust, or the wolf may be named envy, pride, greed, anger, prejudice, hatred, anger. But the wolf is always on the prowl. .

May God grant all us little pigs the power to overcome the wolf.

Amen and amen.