

Let Me Tell You A Story.

I would like to tell you a tale; an animal tale, or should I say “tail.” This story I shall call, “This Little Piggy Went to Market.” (Apologies to the author of this most memorable nursery rhyme.) Oh, before I begin to tell my story, I must ask the reader to think about these few questions. The little piggy went to market, how ? Did it go to shop like you and me ? Did it go in the back of a truck to a shop ? Did it ask to go to market ? What happened to the little piggy when it got there ? Do you get my thought ?

This Little Piggy, its name is Lucky, and what it did is the first chapter of my story. Lucky is a little piggy on a mission to provide essentials for its little piglets. Lucky is about to do what many of us do, we shop for things at a marketplace. As with those of us who have families at home, Lucky knew its responsibility was to supply the proper nutrition and material goods to keep up its family’s well being. So to market Lucky did go.

Now, there is another Little Piggy in my story. This one is named Not-So. Not-So was on its way to market, but not for the same reason, and not to the same market. You guessed it. Not-So was on its way to the meat market to become proper nutrition. Do you think that Not-So wanted to go to market this way ? Maybe Not-So, being a neighbor of Lucky, was angry that its destiny was chosen to be what it was to become. Why Not-So and not Lucky ? Why Lucky and not Not-So ? Were not these two Little Piggy creatures equal ? Did the origin of their creation decide that one piggy was better than the other ? Was it predetermination ? Was it just the luck of the draw - no pun intended ? Who was to decide ?

Many questions are raised in the opening chapter of my story. Where does the story go from here ? Let us both look at the questions just presented. Lucky and Not-So were both animals created for a reason by the origin. Here the origin is God, through the workings of humans - animal husbandry persons. God made both animals equal in being; although they may not have been equal in stature. For Lucky, it was a piggy given the mission of being human-like in its responsibilities. Not-So obviously was given the mission to be, well, you know. The correlation to humans is easily observable. Humans were created to be equals, even though they may not have been equal in stature (using a broad definition of stature, here). Sure, humans do not treat each other as equals. God did. God created Adam as one human and Eve as another human; as

Hebrew Scripture tells us. At the beginning they were both equal - the (Tao) yin and yang of human -beings. They had a purpose given by God to be partners, a team, "one flesh," to be "fertile, increase, and fill the earth..." That is, to cultivate and nurture the earth, and live side-by side with the other creatures of the earth who were the first helpers for Adam - human. (Torah, Gen. 2:18) Good story. But, there is another version in Genesis chapter one (Gen. 1:28). Here God indicates that man, without name, is to rule "every thing that is to creep the earth in which there is the breath of life." Here is one answer to the question of why Lucky and Not-So are not being treated the same: it is man - humans. God saw humans as good, so says Genesis. But, humans wanted more. And, a non-human creature (also created by God, remember) became the promulgator of the saga that life became. The concept of equal became not so equal. One element of the species became unequal to the other. Species became unequal to each other. Who was to decide which was more equal, more superior? Humans became the deciders. Humans took the decision-making away from God; or, did they?

The legendary theologian, scientist, cleric, and oracle of early Christianity St Thomas Aquinas, became the source of much of the theological thought of the early church. His Summa Theologica established numerous elements of church dogma. Even more, he established some of the critical doctrines of humanity which are still regarded today (one being a Just War criterion.) St Thomas divided humans and non-humans into two categories: those which are rational, and those which are not. Easy to guess which category humans fell into. Aquinas was not a non-human. For Aquinas, animals possessed no mind and no reason. Because of their nature, St Thomas opined that animals were to be in the service of humans. Why? Because God said humans were the rulers, as it was spoken in Genesis 1:28. To this, I suspect St Thomas added an interpretation from Genesis 2:18 which places animals as the helpers of humans. And finally, because Aquinas thought that animals cannot love, and that love is for God and human neighbors only, then animals have no status with God. (Aquinas did not own a dog I bet).

As time went along St Thomas' thoughts dug into the fabric of Christian thinking. Karl Barth

in the early twentieth-century stuck to this theme. As Genesis states, God gave the responsibility to be "fertile, increase and fill the earth" to humans, that made humans the entrusted species in the lifeline paradigm. Barth also saw the

emergence of Jesus as God incarnate, as the indicator that humans were to be the superior species. Barth seems to believe God was not going to give the honor of being the Saviour to an animal. Thus Barth, a respected scholar and honored Christian theologian of the Roman Church, entrenched the concept that animals were put on this earth to be used by and treated by humans as humans pleased. These two voices held court for a while. There were other voices which came forth to raise up the value, importance and respect for all living beings, as God said “in which there is the breath of life.” One such was Albert Schweitzer.

It is Schweitzer who I owe the initial spark for a new belief in the place that animals have in the God-sphere. God created animals at the same time as humans, depending on which creation story you choose to follow (in one animals came first). Schweitzer's essay “Reverence for Life” (Schweitzer, *Civilization and Ethics*, 1923) raises up the “life-affirmation” of all living beings. The will to live is a universal instinct held by every creature, regardless of size or location. (Schweitzer's book was first published the year before the “Scopes Trial” on evolutionary thought versus creationism.) His beliefs also left open options for human responsibility towards non-humans. That was the door which when opened showed that outside of absolutely no human use of animals - as helpers - any action towards animals should not be thoughtless or unethical. These are the concepts that society has now slowly grown into, regarding treatment of non-humans - animals.

A reverence for life does not mean that those humans who are carnivores are bad people. Beings have a food-chain hierarchy. A human eating a little piggy (oops, sorry Not-So) is no different than a whale swallowing hundreds of smelt in one gulp, or a lion consuming a gazelle. The chain is evident at every level. Luckily of sorts, or maybe not, the only animal in the food chain which is above another human is a human. A reverence for life does mean that how we raise those animals we use for food production or consumption is the issue. Do we treat those animals with respect, without pain, without inhumane treatment? Interesting how inhumane as a concept has always existed, but not observed. These thoughts go beyond animals as food. They include testing purposes for the benefit of humans, animals which are used for sport - either legitimate or illegitimate (there is a dichotomy) - or for protection, and so on. Beating a dog such that it become a fierce guard dog is just as horrible as training that dog, or a rooster, to become a fighter in a ring for betting purposes. Enclosing a chimp

in a small cage, to not roam around with some freedom, while it is a subject for medical experimentation is no different than enclosing a parakeet in a cage with no room to fly. Pain and discomfort for an animal is no different than that for a human.

We as a society abhor the maltreatment of humans. We revile conditions like Darfur. We gasp at the loss of life from a suicide bomber. We do not understand how an angry parent can abuse or kill their own children. Need I say more. No. So why do we overlook the treatment of animals? Is it because we do not care? Is it out of sight, out of mind? Is it that we do not know how animals are treated for experimentation, sport or food? In a recent discussion of these questions with a few colleagues, one phrase kept coming forth when these questions were contemplated: "I never thought about it that way."

Aquinas may have thought that non-humans were not feeling beings - I am certain he never owned a pet. Barth would have never accepted Darwin's theory, I believe. Schweitzer had a theory which has gained acceptance. But, in the final review, why has the human species overlooked the fact that God created animals, just as and at the same time God created humans? If God loved life and existence so much that God also created animals to be fertile, expand and fill the earth, why do humans feel that they are the only living creatures who should not and cannot feel the pain of abuse and maltreatment? Why did Lucky get to go to market to shop; and, why did Not-So go to be shopped (sp)? Humans have decided - with or without God's blessing. Lucky for them it was not the animals.

Epilogue.

This story is about Lucky and Not So. It is a story about humans and animals. Does the reader notice some of the same concepts in how one human treats another?

Is this story a metaphor on how one culture, class, society, community, Race, treats others who do not wear the same "Label?" That is a conversation for another story.

Best Regards to All.

Chaplain on Signal Mountain.

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