

Good News for Humpty Dumpty

I beg your pardon for singing this, but with both my children graduating this spring, one from Concordia College on May 6 and the other from Central High School on May 27, there is just something nostalgic about it:

Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall.
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king's horses and all the king's men,
Couldn't put Humpty together again.

You've all heard the story of Humpty Dumpty. It's perhaps the most well known poem in the English speaking world. It appears in most Mother Goose Nursery Rhyme books. I don't know about you, but I remember singing it to my children when they were very small. However, I'm not really sure why. The story is so sad and hopeless. Why would we sing it for my children?

Could it be because there is some human truth in the story? As Humpty discovers, life can be dangerous and certainly is fragile. I think about that whenever my children are away from me and out of my reach – Erin running at a college track meet yesterday at St. John's University and Michael speaking at a high school region speech tournament in Valley City.

Things can happen to them, or to my wife Margo who was riding a scooter yesterday, or to me for that matter running outside crossing streets. Things can happen to us that hurt us and break us. And, as Humpty found out, sometimes when we are broken, we are not able to be fixed, not even by all the king's horses and king's men, nor by all the doctors and nurses at Altru Hospital.

Yet as Christian people we have a more hopeful message. The message of Easter, when Jesus was raised from the tomb and the message of our Gospel lesson today, when the risen Jesus appeared to his disciples, is different. Sure life is dangerous and fragile, Jesus was crucified by an angry mob and he died a terrible death. However, this story does not end with a broken Jesus.

This story continues with a wind from God, a very special wind, the Holy Spirit, blowing into the tomb and breathing life into Jesus again. "He is not here" an angel proclaimed, "He is risen." God did put Jesus together again. All the king's horses and king's men could not have done this. Doctors and nurses could not have done this. No human could have done this. But God did.

And the story continues for the disciples in our Gospel lesson. Their lives had been broken too. Their teacher and Lord had been executed. He was dead, or at least he had been killed and was still presumed dead. They were huddled in a

house broken by the events of Good Friday, broken by the grief and sadness that they felt, and broken by the fear that the authorities might harm them too.

This is when Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you," and this is when Jesus came and stood among them and breathed on them. When Jesus breathed on them, a wind from God, a very special wind, the Holy Spirit, blew into their lives and gave them a new life. The Holy Spirit blew into their lives and put their broken pieces back together again.

No longer were they broken by sadness and grief because Jesus was risen and stood among them. No longer were they broken by fear because Jesus stood among them and gave them his peace. And no longer were they broken by hopelessness because Jesus stood among them and breathed on them God's Holy Spirit. Now their day and future was bright even though life is fragile.

And the story continues for us, for you and me, as well. We are certainly aware of the dangerous and fragile lives that we lead. We are well aware of the times in our lives where we fall and we are broken. We too are broken by things like sadness, grief, fear, hopelessness, cancer, heart disease, addictions and abuse, and many other life struggles that we face in the course of our lives.

But we are not like Humpty Dumpty. When we fall, when we are broken, when horses and men, doctors and nurses can not put us back together again, the Lord Jesus Christ does. Indeed, Jesus comes and stands with us in the midst of our lives, no matter how well they are going or how broken we are. Just like in the Gospel lesson, Jesus comes and stands with us in our lives.

This means you are never alone to face your life. Whatever you face, you face it with the crucified and risen one standing at your side, walking through life with you, and if need be, carrying you along the way. The risen Lord Jesus is with you right now on this day, and he will be with you tomorrow and always. God raised him from the dead for this reason, so Jesus could always be with us.

Furthermore, Jesus not only stands with us, but he comes with gifts to give us. First, Jesus gives us his peace so we can face our lives with his strength. And then second, Jesus breathes on us that wonderful wind from God, God's Holy Spirit, and this Spirit gives us new life and puts our broken pieces back together again. Our lives are dangerous and fragile, but we have a Lord who helps us.

Years ago I was speaking at a weekend retreat for high school youth. We used this Gospel lesson for today as our theme Scripture for the weekend. The retreat theme was "Held Together by Christ". Over the course of the weekend we put together jigsaw puzzles and talked about how this is a picture of how God puts the broken pieces of our lives together.

During the course of the weekend, I met a young girl from rural North Dakota. Her parents were going through a messy divorce and this was very hard on her. But not only this, her older sister had died a couple years earlier, and this young girl was still grieving very hard for her. She had been contemplating the idea of taking her life and joining her sister in heaven.

This young girl had been broken by the struggles of her life. She had fallen from Humpty's wall and did not feel she could be put back together again. It was not until that weekend retreat, while she was putting together a jigsaw puzzle that she realized there was hope for her. She realized her hope was the Lord Jesus Christ, who was putting her back together again.

She told me that day that she now saw her life differently. Sure it was hard and she was broken, but now she saw her life and herself as a puzzle that Jesus was in the process of putting together. She said this with tears in her eyes and you should not be surprised that I shed my own tears that day too. I'm not sure who taught who more that weekend. I guess we helped each other.

Later in the weekend we did a baptismal remembrance at the hotel pool. We talked about how God was washing away our sins and our struggles that day in the pool. We proclaimed that when we came out of the water that we would be new and whole people. I watched this young girl jump into the pool with great hope in her future. She had truly experienced Easter and the risen Lord.

Jesus came that weekend and stood with that young girl in such a way that she received his peace and God's Holy Spirit. She had fallen and had been hurt, but Jesus and the Holy Spirit, unlike the king's horses and men, was able to put her life back together again. The really cool part about this story is that this young girl became a leader in her youth group and high school.

I find myself wanting to proclaim good news for Humpty Dumpty today – that even for an egg there is hope with Jesus. But what I really want to say is the Lord is more interested in you. Jesus comes to stand with you today in your life to give you peace, to breathe on you God's Holy Spirit, and to put your life back together again. This is what the Lord was raised by God to do.

Like Humpty Dumpty, everyone here will experience their share of falls in life, And like Humpty, everyone here will at times be broken into pieces, so to speak. But what I want you to remember, my friends in Christ, is that Jesus loves you. The Lord loves you very much, and with grace he will put the puzzle that is your life back together again, again and again, until the day you reach heaven.

Amen.