



TELL THE WORLD: NURTURE AND RECLAIMING

June 20, 2015

Children's Story/Parable: Even Elephants Need Understanding*

Read aloud: "Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again'" (John 8:11, NRSV).

Old Bozo, a well-loved circus elephant, enjoyed doing his tricks for all, but he especially loved the children. But one day a change came. He trumpeted angrily at the boys and girls; three times he attempted to kill his keeper. The circus manager decided he was dangerous and must die. Heartless and greedy for money, he sold tickets inviting the crowd to come to the circus and watch a squad of gunners turn their rifles on the mad elephant in his cage.

Bozo trudged in his never-ending circle, often lifting his trunk as he bellowed at the crowd. Outside the cage, the ringmaster waited to give the signal to fire, when a short man went up to the manager.

"Let me go into that cage. I can make your bad elephant well."

"Never! You'd be trampled to death in moments."

"I thought you'd say that so I brought along a legal paper to free you from all responsibility. All the risk is mine."

Assured that the paper was in order, the manager announced that an unarmed man would unbolt the steel door. As he entered, Bozo gave a warning squeal of anger. Then the man spoke a few words and Bozo grew quiet. The man kept talking. No one but Bozo understood what he was saying. Finally, with a small, childlike cry, the elephant began to wag his enormous head from side to side.

After a long while, the man explained that Bozo wasn't bad, just homesick and frustrated. As an Indian elephant, he had grown up hearing the Hindustani language. His big elephant heart was at peace again as he heard the Hindustani words he knew and loved. The crowd cheered.

After the stranger had disappeared, the manager noticed the signature of Rudyard Kipling, the famous writer on India, on the paper.

To understand those who act differently, you must be kind to them instead of condemning them. Then it's easier to make friends with them and help them to feel welcome.

* Adapted, with permission from Eileen and Jay Lantry, *Stop Look and Listen* (Takoma Park, Md.: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1976), p. 321