

“THE POWER OF VOOM”

First in the series *The Gospel According to Dr. Seuss*

Isaiah 1:15-20; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

June 6, 2010

This morning we begin a series that will take us through the end of July. The series is “The Gospel According to Dr. Seuss,” and I hope you’ll have as much fun with it as I know I will! But in addition to fun, I hope that we can all learn a thing or two from one of the most beloved children’s authors ever published.

This morning we begin with a Dr. Seuss classic – *The Cat in the Hat*. But instead of the original, we’ll be looking at the sequel – *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back*. In this story, as in all of the Seuss stories that we’ll be looking at this summer, there is a connection to the gospel of Jesus Christ as written in the Old and New Testaments.



The Cat in the Hat is a bit difficult to figure out. While he’s this cute (or handsome) entertaining creature, he’s also a bit of a trouble-maker. In both of the books featuring this furry feller, The Cat has a penchant for making messes, getting himself into trouble, and, more importantly, getting others into trouble.

Many if not most of us can relate to these stories, because we have that person or those people in our lives – family members or friends – who remind us of the Cat. They’re people we don’t like, but can’t hate. People who make us nervous because they won’t consider sound advice. People who can get themselves into all sorts of trouble and, in the end, come out smelling like a rose.

We can also identify with the messy situations that the mischievous Cat creates. In *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back*, the Cat invites himself into the house of a couple of small children whose parents are not home. He decides to take a bath, and ends up leaving behind an awful-looking pink ring. The Cat gets the bathtub ring off, but the stain ends up on Mother’s new white dress, and then on the wall, Dad’s \$10 shoes, the rug, and the bed. The Cat, realizing he needs some help, calls on a couple of his friends: Little Cats A, B, and C. Little Cat A hits the spot with a broom and sends it off of the bed and on to the T.V. “Little Cat B cleaned up the T.V., He cleaned it with milk, put the spot in a pan! And then C blew it out of the house with a fan!” But then there are pink spots all over the snow. The mess, as is tradition with the Cat, is tremendous.

The Cat decides he needs even more help, and he calls on other cats – twenty-three more of them to be exact. These Cats – Little Cats D through Z – only seem to make the problem worse. The children begin to think that it will never be solved and that they will be the ones in big trouble.

We can identify with the children because we all have our own messes to contend with. Well-intentioned people create problems. Sometimes *we* are the ones creating the problems. We ask for help, but the helpers only seem to make matters worse.

In the beginning of the Biblical story, God created everything and called it good. Even the humans God created were good. But that soon changed. Before long, trash began to appear on this perfect creation: an apple core, a torn fig leaf, a slain brother. As we fast-forward to this generation, we find even more trash – an ever-growing oil spill, polluted skies, hazardous waste sites. Like children on Christmas morning, we have grabbed the gifts of creation and left piles of trash behind.

But the messes of our world are not limited to the earth. One look at the newspaper and we see story after story of organized violence, abuse, homelessness, and hunger. All of this goes on despite Jesus' teaching that when we ignore the "least of these," we are ignoring Jesus. For some, the messes that we have created or inherited overwhelm all hope of ever being cleaned up.

The good news is that it doesn't have to be this way. Isaiah spoke to a people surrounded by gloom and doom. He spoke words of hope that said no matter how scarlet, how deep the stain of sin appeared, God could take it away and they could start all over again. Of course, the opposite was also true – they could reject God's plan and find destruction in their future.

Dr. Seuss writes a happy ending to his story. The smallest cat of the whole bunch, Cat Z, finally brings the solution to the problem. Cat Z has **the power of "Voom"** – a tool so powerful that it can clean up any mess and restore things to the way they used to be.

For Christians, **the power of "Voom"** is the restoring power that came in Jesus Christ. Jesus brings tidings of great joy. He is our Savior, our God, who came into the world we messed up to collect the trash and kick it out of our lives. Christ soaked up the tears we shed and the blood we spilled. And with these things in hand, he climbed to a dumping ground for humans who were considered to have no worth. On a cross, on a hill called Calvary, he disposed of the trash, all the sins of the world.

This is the gospel – the Good News: Even though humans tried to dispose of Jesus because they didn't understand who he was or why he had come, they could not...**the power of VOOM!** Even though they tried to bury him deep in a cave, never to be heard from again, they could not...**the power of VOOM!** God raised Jesus Christ from the dead and gave him the power of everlasting life...**the power of VOOM!**

In the book of Revelation we find a vision of a new creation – a creation redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ:

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud Voice from the throne saying,

‘See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.

And the one who was seated on the throne said, ‘See, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.’”

No matter where our messes came from or how invincible they seem, we worship a God who can defeat them all. Everyone who trusts in God can begin life all over again. God can take our sins and erase them...**VOOM!** God can take our brokenness and make us whole...**VOOM!** All can begin life anew in and through Jesus Christ...**VOOM!**

The apostle Paul knew about this fresh start when he wrote, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!”

On Tuesday nights (when I remember), I pull the trash can out of the garage and take it down to the curb. Early Wednesday morning, the garbage truck empties all of my trash and hauls it away. This morning when we get to the ritual of Holy Communion, we will pray a prayer of confession, reminding ourselves that we don’t always act the way we’re supposed to act. But immediately following that prayer of confession, we’ll hear those comforting words of assurance and pardon: “Christ died while we were yet sinners; that proves God’s love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!” That’s the fresh start; that’s the new creation; That’s **the power of VOOM!** AMEN.