

Taming a Lion

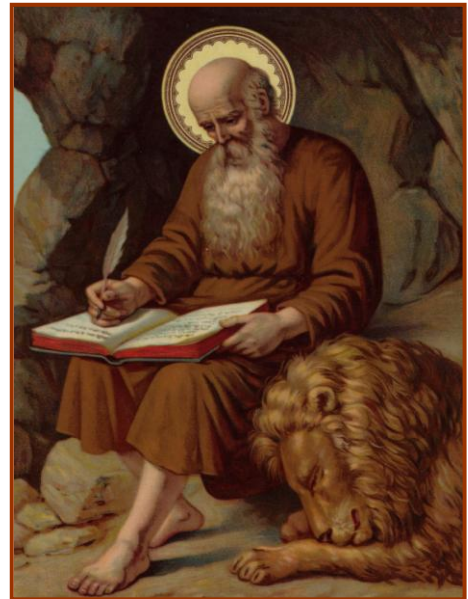
Saint Jerome was a crotchety scholar of the 5th century – a Roman Christian priest, theologian and historian – who fought with everyone and translated the Bible into Latin. He lived in a cloister in Bethlehem with other monks.

Legend has it that a wounded lion one day appeared at the monastery, causing havoc and panic among all – except Jerome. The lion had a thorn in his paw and was in considerable pain. Jerome took it out, brought healing to the wound, and the lion was grateful and became tame, attentive to Jerome.

The problem, however, was: What does one do with a tame lion? Some monks suggested that the lion could keep watch over the monastery's donkey and an old man who regularly went into the forest to bring back firewood for the monastery. Others said a lot of good that would do, for sooner or later the lion would pounce on the helpless donkey and eat him up. But Jerome decided that the lion would, indeed, make a good security guard for the wood-gathering process. The lion dutifully kept the donkey and the old man safe from wild animals and protected them.

One day, the lion fell asleep, and some robbers came along, spied the donkey, bound the old man and took them away. When the lion awoke and realized what had happened, he blamed himself and trotted guiltily back home. Some of the monks said, "Aha, we knew it. The lion ate the donkey!" But Jerome said, "No, we don't know that for sure. Let's not be too hasty to judge."

Days later, while the lion was resting outside near a road, he saw a caravan, and who was leading it but the donkey! The lion was overjoyed. He ran to meet his old friend, scaring the daylights out of the robbers. They fled to the nearest protection, which was the monks' cloister. They fell down at the feet of Jerome and begged his forgiveness, if only their lives could be spared. They promised that whenever they came back that way, they would provide for the monks.



The lion came in, lay down, stretched out and wagged his tail as if asking for forgiveness for a crime he never committed. To this day, Jerome is pictured with a lion crouched at his feet.

The lessons from this story:

1. Let's not be too quick to judge what may appear to be obvious as wrongdoing.
2. A good deed – even to an enemy – can produce favorable results.
3. Forgiveness has its rewards.

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you (Luke 6:27-28).

– Beecher Hunter