

## The Parable of the Birds



Louis Cassels – a correspondent, and later senior editor, for United Press International – authored a popular column, *Religion in America*, from 1955 to 1974. He wrote *The Parable of the Birds* and distributed it through UPI in December 1959.

It appeared in newspapers and on radio broadcasts across the country. One of the most notable voices to introduce the story on the air was Paul Harvey, the master storyteller of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In his parable, Cassels addresses some of the significant reasons why God chose to come into the world as a man – to demonstrate His love for people, to show His intimate understanding of human life and to personally deliver the message of salvation.

Here is the parable:

*Now the man to whom I'm going to introduce you was not a scrooge; he was a kind, decent, mostly good man. He was generous to his family and upright in his dealings with other men. But he just didn't believe all that stuff about God becoming a man, which the churches proclaim at Christmastime. It just didn't make sense, and he was too honest to pretend otherwise.*

*"I'm truly sorry to distress you," he told his wife, "but I'm not going with you to church this Christmas Eve." He said he'd feel like a hypocrite and that he would much rather just stay at home. And so, he stayed, while his family went to the midnight service.*

*Shortly after the family drove away in the car, snow began to fall. He went to the window to watch the flurries getting heavier and heavier. Then he went back to his fireside chair to read his newspaper. Minutes later, he was startled by a thudding sound. Then another and another – sort of a thump or a thud. At first, he thought someone must have been throwing snowballs against his living room window.*

*But when he went to the front door to investigate, he found a flock of birds huddled miserably in the snow. They'd been caught in the storm and, in a desperate search for shelter, had tried to fly through his large landscape window. Well, he couldn't let the poor creatures lie there and freeze, so he remembered the barn where his children stabled their pony. That would provide a warm shelter, if he could direct the birds to it.*

*Quickly he put on a coat and galoshes and then trampled through the deepening snow to the barn. He opened the doors wide and turned on a light, but the birds did not come in. He figured food would entice them. So, he hurried back to the house, fetched breadcrumbs and sprinkled them on the snow. He made a trail to the brightly lit, wide-open doorway of the stable. But to his dismay, the birds ignored the breadcrumbs and continued to flap around helplessly in the snow.*

(more)

*He tried catching them. He tried shooing them into the barn by walking around them and waving his arms. Instead, they scattered in every direction, except into the warm, lighted barn. And then he realized that they were afraid of him. To them, he reasoned, I am a strange and terrifying creature. If only I could think of some way to let them know that they can trust me – that I am not trying to hurt them but to help them. But how?*



*Any move he made tended to frighten and confuse them. They just would not follow. They would not be led or shooed, because they feared him.*

*“If only I could be a bird,” he thought to himself, “and mingle with them and speak their language. Then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to the safe and warm barn. But I would have to be one of them, so they could see and hear and understand.”*

*At that moment the church bells began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the sounds of the wind. And he stood there listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas. And he sank to his knees in the snow.*

*“Now I understand,” he whispered. “Now I see why you had to do it.”*

What a powerful parable. The heart of the Christian faith is the assertion that God revealed Himself in history in the person of Jesus Christ. Truly, the idea that God became a man and walked among His creation is one of the most profound claims of Christianity.

Louis Cassels presented that truth in a compelling and understandable way. Here’s how the Bible explained it:

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14 NKJV).*

– Beecher Hunter