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### God Started it: Helping

We all may be familiar with the Chicken Little story of the sky is falling. I never ran across psychoanalysis of the story but I suppose I'm not the first to wonder what possessed Chicken Little to draw that conclusion. Something fell on Chicken Little's head and that was all it took to raise the specter in Chicken Little's mind of catastrophe. Perhaps Chicken Little was of timid disposition and was pretty much worried about everything. Perhaps Chicken Little led a rather humdrum life and found that catastrophizing spiced it up a bit. Perhaps leaping to the worst conclusion about the sky was a psychological defense mechanism so as to avoid facing the real problems Chicken Little had. So, perhaps Chicken Little wasn't even so chicken, but rather as human as anything else?

It might be thought that the story of Chicken Little is one of Aesop's fables but it is not. It is part of the Jataka Tales of ancient Buddhist Indian folklore. The original version had a hare as the protagonist. The most common ending to the story is that on the way to tell the king about the falling sky, Chicken Little and friends encounter a fox who exploits their fear by promising to show them the way to the king but actually lures them into the fox's den and makes a meal of them. The moral is that in their panic the friends were vulnerable to manipulation by those who would lure them into real danger.

One tragedy of the fable is that it took so long for the friends to travel to the king. Apparently they had confidence in the king's capacity to do something about the falling sky but had trouble finding the king.

We have our share of sky is falling prognosticators today, do we not? There is the credit crises, stock market collapse, seemingly endless wars, unfathomable national debt, a melting polar ice cap and rising tides and vicious storms and all the other disastrous consequences of global warming. Both presidential candidates approach us for our votes by saying in one way or another that they know how to prevent the approaching calamity. These would-be kings apparently already know the status of the sky and need no one to tell them about it. On the other hand the present king often seems curiously unaware until the sky finally begins actually to crumble and even then it seems a piece of it needs to fall directly upon his head before he notices. Then he suddenly tells us there is no time to lose to adopt drastic measures of one sort or another to prevent the whole thing from falling down. Of course, all the kings thus far mentioned have their spelling with a small k and hasn't that always been the liability of such commanders.

*God is our refuge and our strength, the Psalmist sang, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with tumult. (Psalm 46:1-3)*

It's a general word, isn't it, *help*? Some may think it needs defining and in many contexts that might be appropriate, but this morning it may not be the specifics of what the help is and the form it takes as that it is here, now, presently, very presently. Isn't that a great phrase, *a very present help*, very present. I guess that means now'er than now, or here'er than here. So, we have a very present help, right now, right here, and maybe just how that help is going to help us isn't important to know sometimes. Let's just know that help is here. In our individual lives, in the life of our town and nation and world, the help that we need is here, now.

And how we all understand that life does have its problems and those problems hurt, and they can lead to more problems and those can hurt more. There is pain in the world and it visits us in our bodies and in our hearts and minds and souls. It comes to our families and friends and neighbors and nation. It inflicts us financially, medically, politically, spiritually. Sometimes it has nothing to do with us other than that we seem to be in its way. Other times we contribute to its coming, and we might even acknowledge that, but it still hurts, it hurts until it heals. And faith doesn't directly take away the pain. That's not what faith does. Whatever the situation, whatever the hurt, faith doesn't take away the pain, faith takes away the fear.

We can stay calm, we can stay confident. God will help us. God already has. Ours is just to seek first the kingdom of God and everything else will be added to us. Are there any among us at this moment in our national life who do not now see that the other way doesn't work? Me first; all I can get for myself, first; strike the other before the other strikes me; there is not enough for everyone so hoard all that I possibly can for myself; if someone else has what I want I should get it in whatever way I can\_ buy it, grab it, make him give it to me; get what we want from the earth but don't take care of it. Are there any among us who do not see today of all days that seeking our own kingdoms first doesn't work? We don't need to panic. God will help us. We need to think clearly. God will help us. We need to help each other and thereby help ourselves.