

"God is Everywhere - Even in Nursery Rhymes!" can be enjoyed by children for the rhymes themselves, and by adults, by reading the commentaries after each rhyme that demonstrate how God is in the rhymes.

God is Everywhere – Even In Nursery Rhymes!

by James F. Malerba

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God
is Everywhere -
Even in
Nursery Rhymes!



James F. Malerba

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The (Generous) Black Sheep

Black sheep, black sheep,
Have you any wool?
Yes, sir. Yes, sir.
Three bags full.
One for the master,
And one for the dame,
And one for the little boy,
Who lives down the lane.

We all know that rhyme; but what meaning lies beneath the surface? Symbolically, the black sheep is usually a family member or someone else who is being ignored or treated badly because of something he or she has done, or is not welcome for some other reason. This is the person you would not invite to your next party.

This nursery rhyme, however, gives virtually hero status to the black sheep. The other sheep are not asked for their wool, yet the black sheep eagerly shares his wool with three others. There is more than one interpretation to show Divine Presence. First, the number three – for the number of people getting the wool – can represent God (the Master) the dame (the Blessed Mother), and Jesus (the little boy). Also, the wool can represent God's gifts to all – men, women and children. Three bags full would be a lot culled from one sheep, black or otherwise, indicting an unending source of God's love and grace for all.

So, why a sheep at all? Sheep are the gentlest of all animals, trusting and obedient to their human masters. Jesus often used sheep as a metaphor in his preaching. In Matthew (9:36), Jesus pitied the people following him, because they seemed to be spiritually lost – sheep without a shepherd.

Also in Matthew (15:24), when the Canaanite woman begged Jesus to heal her daughter, he told her he was on a mission to serve just the lost sheep of Israel. Of course, Jesus was not cruel and he granted the

woman's wish after testing her faith. This was a lesson for the disciples, who had tried to shoo the woman away.

Jesus used yet another metaphor when he referred to himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:11). We are all "sheep" and must follow the Good Shepherd into eternal life by our obedience to Him.



Hot Cross Buns (for “Hot” Spirituality)

Hot cross buns, hot cross buns.

One a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns.

If you have no daughters, give them to your sons.

One a penny, two a penny, hot cross buns.

Hot cross buns, sold mostly during the Christian season of Lent, supposedly had their origin in the year 1361. Brother Thomas Rodcliffe of St. Alban's Abbey in Hertfordshire, England, is said to have developed the recipe for "the Aban Bun", which he gave to the poor on Good Friday.

In 1733, the Oxford English Dictionary referenced hot cross buns and also described them in a way that sounded like a now-familiar rhyme: "Good Friday comes this month, the old woman runs, with one or two a penny hot cross buns" (*from online sources*).

In the Old Testament, There are references, not to hot cross buns, but to their predecessors (raisin cakes). One is found in 1 Samuel (25:9-39). When David sent messengers to honor Nabal, a wealthy but nasty man, and let him know he and his men came to them in peace and in need of sustenance, Nabal screamed at them, rather than welcome the delegation.

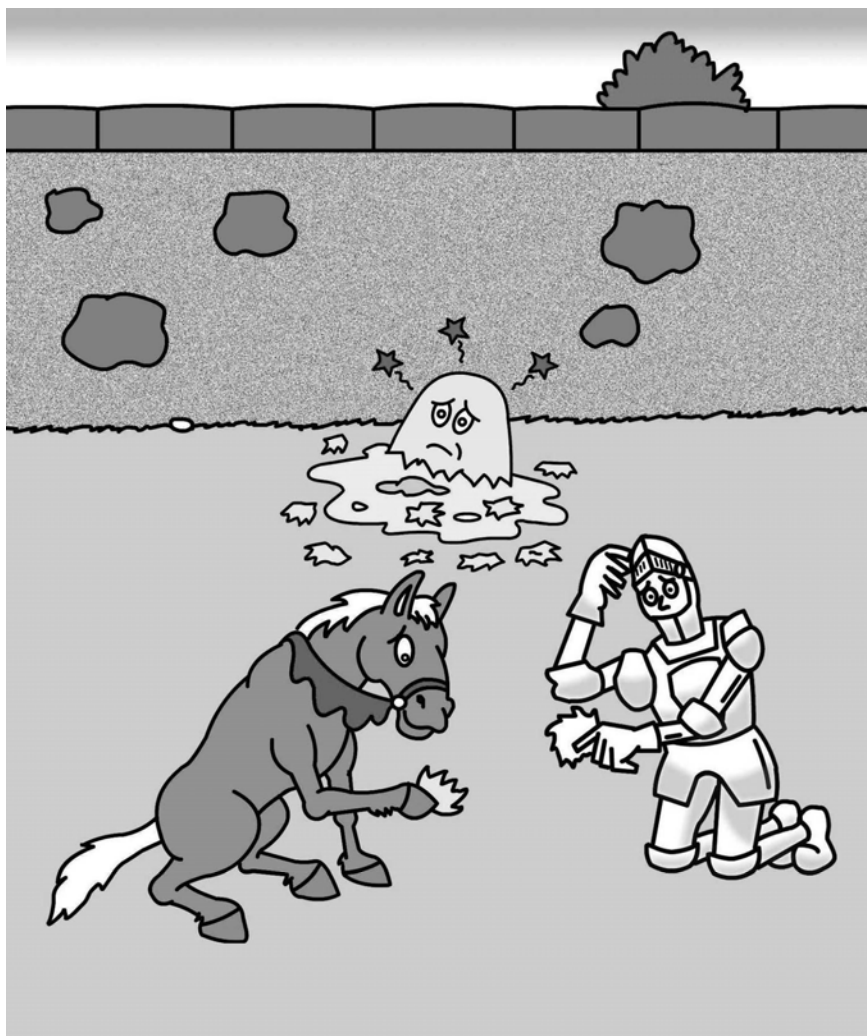
Totally abashed, Nabal's wife, Abigail, hastily prepared two hundred loaves of bread (She must have had a huge oven!), wine, dressed sheep, roasted grain, and made two hundred cakes in which there were raisins (figs, in some translations) to feed David and his men. David blessed Abigail for her great generosity, but Nabal did not fare so well. After a drunken night, he fell ill and died ten days later.

Another instance in which raisins had deep meaning is in 2 Samuel (6:1-19). David had just returned the Ark of the Lord to Jerusalem. In

celebration, he gave all his people food, including for each a raisin cake. No one was to go hungry, for David left no one without sustenance.

David's generosity has a parallel to the Eucharist, albeit indirectly. When Jesus fed the five thousand (probably at least triple that, with the uncounted women and children), with just five loaves of bread and two fish, the entire mass of people ate their fill that day (Matthew 14:13-21).

The Lord was sending a message to the disciples, especially, that satisfying the physical hunger would lead to something far more important – satisfying everyone's spiritual hunger, which He revealed at the Last Supper, instituting the Eucharist..



Humpty Dumpty (Lacking Faith?)

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall.

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.

**All the king's horses and all the king's men,
Couldn't put Humpty together again.**

One question we might ask ourselves is whether Humpty Dumpty was the clumsiest “person” on Earth. Most likely, Humpty the egg – as he is usually depicted – fell asleep while sitting on the wall or was distracted, causing himself to fall. Either way, it would not have taken much to shatter him.

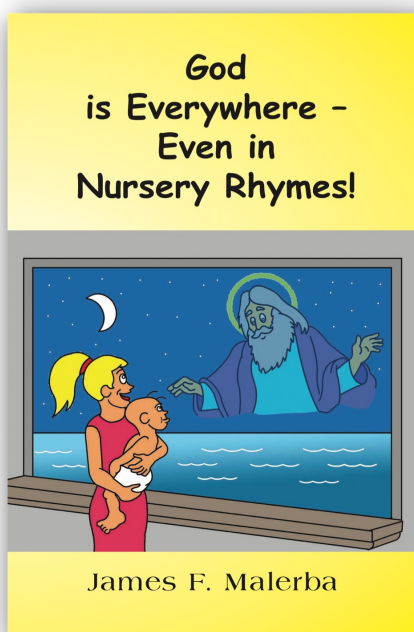
The fall, however then led to the concerted efforts of royal lineage to try to fix the poor oaf. Who were those who came to the aid of this unfortunate creature? The king’s horses? Really? Not likely that horses would be proficient or have even a rudimentary knowledge of egg repair (if there were even such a thing).

More likely, they would trample on poor Humpty, shattering him into even tinier pieces. The king’s men, however, convey a stronger significance for us, for they can be seen as the clergy, who work tirelessly to not only enhance their parishioners’ faith, but also to “repair” fallen-away souls and bring them back to God.

Perhaps Humpty chose the wrong path and was comfortable with his decision. His shattering was thus not a physical one, but rather of the spirit. So, the fateful fall Humpty Dumpty experienced can include all people who have suffered an abandoning of faith.

However, spirituality and love of God can always put a person (including Humpty Dumpty) back together again through atonement and a return to faith practices. God is there for us to love him.

All sinners can be saved for the Kingdom by expressing sorrow for all our sins, even in their last hours or moments of life. God, after all, is most forgiving. No more dramatic proof of this is Jesus promising Paradise to the “Good Thief” as he and the Lord hung on crosses (Luke 23:43). Where there is life, there is always hope.



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