

## Theological Musings from Dave's Laptop

August 16, 2016

Gary Furr and I were Chaplain Residents together at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas during the year 1979-1980. When the Pastor Search Committee of the First Baptist Church of Carlisle, Kentucky asked to have a recording of a sermon from me, I had no such sermon (having only preached four or five times total), and I asked Gary if I might preach on Sunday night at his small church in the "metropolis" of Gholson, Texas, just outside Waco.



Gary was kind enough to allow me to do that, and I preached to a door-bustin' crowd of twelve people, after which, by God's grace, the good people of First Baptist, Carlisle, invited me to become their pastor . . . anyway. A lot of history has intervened, and Gary and I have done many things since then. I think I've moved around more than he has, since he's been the pastor of the Vestavia Hills Baptist Church, on the hill overlooking Samford University in Birmingham, for many years.

Gary and I share several interests in common, one of which is an enjoyment of Dr. Seuss. The current issue of *Nurturing Faith Journal* (formerly *Baptists Today*) includes a sermon he did recently that was inspired by the Seuss tale, *Horton Hears a Who!*, and, since I've made you think pretty hard lately in this column, I've enclosed Gary's sermon as "lighter fare" for this week. Gary noted that he wasn't sure how such an effort would be received, and he attributes at least part of its warm reception to the fact that it was only ten minutes long ☺.

Finally, there will be no *Laptop* for the next two weeks, since Jill and I will be on vacation with Nathan and his family in Oregon. Blessings all around!

Dave



# *Horton hears a Who . . . and Jesus does, too*

Dr. Gary Furr, Pastor

Vestavia Hills, Baptist Church, Birmingham, Alabama

In the grand universe, on this ball we call earth,  
'Twas a small speck of dust, some would say of no worth  
An obscure little dot on the Milky Way's fringe  
In a cosmos so big it can leave you unhinged.

Some don't believe that God really is  
And that humans are only a chemical fizz,  
But into that world came the man Jesus Christ  
Making loaves and fishes multiply out of sight.

Lots of people were listening and heard Jesus say,  
"I have come now among you to love and to save."  
And the Negabob Naysayers and all their friends  
Said, "No, there's only the way it has been."

There are good ones and bad ones and you must ask us  
Who is God's favorite and who are the just?  
For the Negabob Naysayers were in charge of stuff  
And decided that God's heart was not big enough.

They got mad at Jesus, he talked kind of crazy.  
He listened to people they thought were all lazy,  
Didn't do doodly squat when it came to the law -  
They were nothings and no one cared about them at all.

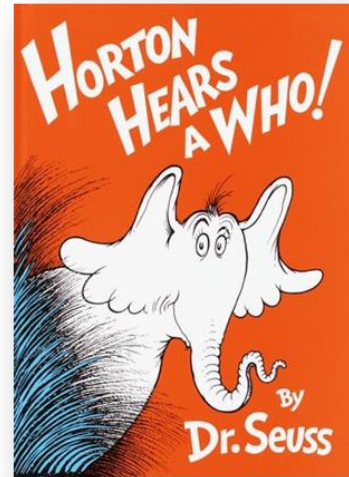
But Jesus was calm, and he taught them a lesson -  
How to open their ears and learn how to listen.  
Not unlike old Horton, they started to hear  
Past all their habits and troublesome fears.

The Negabob Naysayers only got madder,  
So they went to the governor Pilate to chatter,  
And said Jesus finally had gone too far -  
If Pilate was smart, he would start up a war.

The Negabob Naysayers thought they loved God . . .  
They just hated his people that they thought were odd.  
But Jesus just loved and invited them in -  
The ones who were lepers and the ones who had sinned;

The ones who were traitors and those who did wrong.  
Some lived in graveyards and howled all night long;  
Others were lost in the crowds around him  
But he still could feel them touch his garment's hem.

The crowd would be roaring, no one could hear,  
When one called out to him, "Please, Lord, come near."  
Sick ones and sad ones and some with bad pasts,  
All of them offered new beginnings at last.



They laughed and they cried, it was too good to be true.  
He said, "Don't be worried, God still cares for you."  
You may think you don't matter at all,  
But to God, a person's a person, no matter how small.

The Negabob Naysayers told some big fibs  
About things that he said and things that he did.  
So they tried to stop him with a terrible cross  
And even his followers thought all was lost.

But God played a wonderful joke the third day,  
He turned all the tables in a most funny way.  
What seemed the end was beginning again -  
A tomb with no body, and alive to his friends.

They didn't believe Mary when she came to say,  
"He's alive, he's alive, I just saw him today."  
The words he had told them, and the way that he lived  
Must be the right ones to follow and give.

And he gave us a life and a way to go round  
To find what is lost that waits to be found.  
And so now, he gives us his eyes to see,  
And his ears to listen to life carefully.

Just like Jesus, we hear through the noise  
Hearts of dads and mothers and little girls and boys,  
People who nobody listens to anymore -  
Hear them longing for God's happy forevermore.

Big ones and small ones and rich ones and poor,  
People with mansions and those with dirt floors,  
We hear tiny voices forgotten by all,  
'Cause a person's a person, no matter how small.

Oh, the world that we live in still clatters and clangs.  
There are still kangaroos and the Wickersham gangs,  
Their ears so stopped up they don't believe me or you,  
So afraid they would boil us in Beezlenut stew.

The Negabob Naysayers tweet, shout and moan  
About good ones and bad ones and that we're all alone.  
They would have us, we hear, to give up on love,  
And stop loving Jesus who's weak as a dove.

But I always remember when I get afraid  
That when things look their worst, just to wait a few days.  
For you never know if you have ears to listen  
Just what might happen to that one or this'n.

God loves us all, but God doesn't shout.  
God whispers and sings and spreads his love out.  
So all that he asks is that we quiet down,  
Stop all the screaming and knocking around.

Even if the Negabobs don't believe us,  
We refuse to let negabobbing stop and deceive us.  
The whispers of God's love are right over there,  
In us, and with u, and here everywhere.

God loves the creation and flowers and trees  
And animals and even loves you and me.  
So when people are hurting, and you know they do,  
Don't get all huffy, just stay calm and true.

They cry out sometimes out of pure pain,  
Afraid of the world and of you and the rain,  
Not sure you can hear them or that you care  
Wondering if God really is there.

Be just like Jesus, and listen real clear.  
Don't listen to terror or sadness or fear,  
Don't write off each other like old Negabobs.  
Don't give up on failures and mad ones and slobs.

Jesus can clean out the wax from their ears,  
Open their eyes and dry up their tears.  
Even the Negabob Naysayers still have a chance  
If they'll give up naysaying and join in the dance.

So if you're not too sure that you matter to God,  
That you're not important or that you are odd,  
Remember that Jesus came to this speck of dust  
To seek and to save him and her, you, and us.

The End.

*O God, whose eye sees all things, knows all of us,  
loves beyond our knowing, open our hearts, clean out  
our ears, make us think right, forgive us where we fail,  
that we might strive again to hear the whispers of love  
and life you offer us. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Gary Furr, pastor of Vestavia Hills Baptist Church  
in Birmingham, Alabama, blogs at [garyfurr.me](http://garyfurr.me).

