

Why Fairy Tales?

This summer, for the Conversation Café we are reading folk/fairy tales from around the world. These stories follow a similar pattern. They usually begin with a good situation or family. Very quickly the story moves to temptation, something seriously gone wrong for people/animals. The characters must choose between greed and generosity, friendship or selfishness, promises or infidelity, or bravery or fear.

The problems are resolved in a variety of ways. Sometimes deception and trickery were involved to get to a good end. At other times, good character and choices paid off. When bad choices were made, the consequence was ruin with no hope of another chance. When good choices were made, peace was had for all.

Many see in the movement of fairy tales the sequence of the Biblical story retold throughout the Bible in many smaller stories. There is a good situation followed by temptation followed by the consequence for good and bad choices. It reminds me of the gospel explained in John 3:16. "God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish (be ruined) but have eternal life."

Apparently, I am not the only one who observes the parallel between fairy tales and the Biblical story. Consider what J.R.R. Tolkien says.

The Gospels contain a fairy-story, or a story of a larger kind which embraces all the essence of fairy-stories. They contain many marvels—peculiarly artistic, beautiful, and moving: 'mythical' in their perfect, self-contained significance; and among the marvels is the greatest and most complete conceivable eucatastrophe. But this story has entered History and the primary world; the desire and aspiration of sub-creation has been raised to the fulfillment of Creation. The Birth of Christ is the eucatastrophe of Man's history. The Resurrection is the eucatastrophe of the story of the Incarnation. This story begins and ends in joy. It has pre-eminently the 'inner consistency of reality'. There is no tale ever told that men would rather find was true, and none which so many sceptical men have accepted as true on its own merits. For the Art of it has the supremely convincing tone of Primary Art, that is, of Creation. To reject it leads either to sadness or to wrath."

— J.R.R. Tolkien, *Tolkien on Fairy-stories* <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/on-fairy-stories>

So this summer, enter the world of folk tales and let us see something of the reality of the true story, the story of humankind and the offer of redemption.

Many thanks to Adeline Chang who suggested this series, picked out the stories, wrote and condensed version of them, and helped me rethink through and edit the questions. This project would not have come about if it were not for her contributions.

Order of Stories

1. The Golden Nugget (friendship)
China 2 Timothy 4:9-18
2. The Boy and the Wolves (promises and regrets)
Native American John 18:15-18,25-26, 21:15-19
3. Lady Clare (marriage and commitment)
Spain/Portugal Eccl. 5:1-7
4. Grasp All, Lose All (greed)
India Proverbs 28:25, Luke 11:37-41
5. The Lute Player (rescue)
Russia Colossians 1:13-14, Romans 3:24, 8:
6. The Steel Cane (discipline and unrepentance)
Armenia Hebrews 12:4-13
7. Samba the Coward (bravery and fear)
Sudan Acts 4:1-22
8. How the Rabbit Lost His Tail (jealousy and contentment)
Brazil 1 Timothy 6:3-10



