

Get in the wheelbarrow and bell the cat

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French daredevil acrobat Charles Blondin gained fame as the first person to walk across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. In 1860, Blondin crossed the Niagara Falls again on a 335 meter tightrope suspended 50 meters above the raging water. Then to the amazement of the crowd, he crossed it again pushing a wheelbarrow in front of him. When his manager asked the crowd if they believed Blondin could cross back to the other side with a man in the wheelbarrow, they all enthusiastically expressed their confidence in the Great Blondin. However, when the manager invited anyone in the crowd to get into the wheelbarrow, no one took him up on his offer. The manager himself then got in the wheelbarrow and Blondin took him safely across. Everyone had believed that Blondin could perform the feat, but no one acted on their faith.

Aesop once told a fable about a group of mice who lived in a barn. Life was wonderful, except for a sneaky cat. Hardly a day went by without a poor mouse being chased or even eaten by the cat. Finally, the head mouse called a meeting.

“Ladies and gentlemen, youngsters and baby mice,” he stated. “The time is now come to resolve our problems with the cat. Does anyone have any solutions?” The mice were abuzz with ideas and suggestions, but none seemed to solve the problem.

Then a young mouse got up, took the floor, and said boldly, “Let’s hang a bell around the cat’s neck. That way, whenever the cat is near, we’ll hear the ringing and safely hide.” The crowd applauded loudly as the young mouse took his seat.

Once the applause died down, an elderly mouse rose to his feet and said, “Our young friend’s plan is simple yet ingenious. Once the bell is on the cat, we’ll all live safely. But I have one brief question to put to you all: Which one of you will volunteer to bell the cat?”

Jesus gives us a new idea and a new standard of what life can be like. We can travel safely over the chasms of life if we let Him push the wheel barrow. We can have a new sense of safety if the threatening cats in our lives are belled.

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But then, there’s always the question, isn’t there? Who’s willing to risk stepping out and acting on what they profess to believe? Who’s willing to do the hard, dirty, perhaps even dangerous work of the Kingdom of God that needs to be done? Who’s willing to get in the wheelbarrow? Who’s willing to bell the cat?



Charles Blondin