

WHO WILL TURN THE HERD?

DR. GLENN ROBERTSON

MICAH 1-2

For our Cowboy Sunday gathering I want to share an old cowboy song. When I was young, my father had a Marty Robins record, *More Gunfighter Ballads and Trail Songs*. These were Western and Cowboy songs. "One of them was Little Joe the Wrangler". It has the same tune as "The Lilly of the Valley" in our hymnal. Whenever I sing the church song, it reminds me of the cowboy ballad. The ballad has an interesting history as well as being an interesting song. So does the tune it is based on.

I don't play the guitar nor the banjo, so I'm going to let Don Edwards sing this song to us. The lyrics are included in the online notes to help you get to know this old cowboy song (as sung by Marty Robins).

Little Joe The Wrangler

Recorded by Marty Robbins
Written by Howard (Jack) Thorpe

Little Joe the wrangler will wrangle nevermore
His days with the roundup they are o'er
Was a year ago last April when he rode into our camp.
Just a little Texas stray and nothing more

Was late in the evening when he rode into our camp
On a little Texas pony he called Chaw
With his brogan shoes and overalls a tougher looking kid
You never in your life before had saw

His saddle was a Texas 'kack built many years ago
An O.K. spur on one foot lightly swung
With his pack rolled in a cotton sack so loosely tied behind
And a canteen from his saddle horn was slung

He said he had to leave his home his pa had married twice
His new ma whipped him every day or two
So he saddled up old Chaw one night and lit a shuck this way
He said he'd try to paddle his own canoe

He'd said if we would give him work he'd do the best he could
Though he didn't know straight up about a cow
So the boss he cut him out a mount and kindly put him on
He sorta liked this little kid somehow

He learned to wrangle horses and learned to know them all
And get them in at daybreak if he could
And to trail the old chuck wagon and always hitch the team
And help the cookie evenings rustle wood

We had hardly reached the Pecos (Red River) the weather it was fine
We were camped down on the south side in a draw
When a northern commenced blowing and we doubled up our guard
It took everyone of us to hold them in

Little Joe the wrangler was called out with the rest
Scarcely had the little fellow reached the herd
When the cattle they stampeded like a hail storm on they fled
And everyone was riding for the lead

Amid the streaks of lightning there was one horse up ahead
He was trying to catch the leaders in their speed
It was Little Joe the wrangler with a slicker o'er his head
He was riding old Blue Rocket in the lead

At last we got them milling and kinda quieted down
And the extra guards back to the wagon went
But there was one a-missing you could see it at a glance
Was our little Texas stray poor wrangler Joe

Next morning just at daybreak we found where Rocket fell
Down in a washout twenty feet below
Beneath his horse his life was gone his spur had rung its knell
Was our little Texas stray poor wrangler Joe

I. LITTLE JOE THE WRANGLER – HISTORY – Little Joe tried to turn the herd on a stormy night.

A cowboy named Howard (Jack) Thorp wrote “Little Joe the Wrangler” in 1898 while helping trail a herd from Chimney Lake, New Mexico, to Higgins, Texas.

Sitting around the campfire one night he scribbled the words on an old paper bag. He knew the wrangler and decided to pen a song about him to the tune of “Little Old Log Cabin in the Lane.” His song began to circulate around the cattle camps after he sang it at a saloon in Weed, New Mexico. He first published it in his 1908 book *Songs of the Cowboys*.

In the lyrics Thorp writes, “we’d driven to Red River, the weather had been fine. We were camped down on the south side in a bend.” That’s when a norther started blowing, and the cattle stampeded. Little Joe met his end.

As songs like “Little Joe” and Curley Fletcher’s “Strawberry Roan” drifted around the West, the lyrics were often localized and adapted to another horse and location.

II. THE LITTLE OLD LOG CABIN DOWN IN THE LANE – HISTORY – Charles Fry tried to turn the herd of the lost when he wrote The Lilly of the valley to the tune, “the little old log cabin down the lane.”

The tune, “The Little Old Log Cabin Down in the Lane,” is a minstrel song popularly sung in dance halls. Written by William S. Hays, in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1871. The tune had become popular in England in the late 1880’s.

Charles W. Fry, while serving with the Salvation Army in England in 1881, picked up the tune and wrote The Lilly of the Valley as a Christian song. It wasn’t published until after his death. He changed the tune, as was common, and it was then called Salvationist.

The Salvation Army tended to do as Charles Wesley did. They took popular secular songs and wrote Christian words to help attract people to Christ. The lost knew already knew the popular tunes, so it was easy for them to listen to the gospel message in the new song. In 1954, Brigadier Frank Longino, of the Salvation Army wrote:

“In our worship services we still use the stately and formal hymns of the church. In our street services, however, we use the gay and rollicking sort, and so have become identified with this type alone.” William J. Reynolds, Companion to the Baptist Hymnal.

What is the difference between a Western or Cowboy song and Country music? The difference is that Cowboy songs came out of

cowboy camps; and they sing of the life of cowboy experiences. However, Country music comes out of Nashville, and they have never seen a cow.

Contemporary (new songs) are still an attempt to turn the herd in our day.

What is the difference between a hymn and a gospel song?

Reynolds says there were three kinds of songs developed over the ages of Christian worship. Hymns grew out of the Psalter (singing Psalms). These stately hymns have verses were developed by some like Isaac Watts.

Spiritual songs came about in America as secular folk songs tunes were used with new Christian lyrics added. Some hymnbooks were written with both in collections. The earliest were written without any notes. Those came much later.

Gospel Songs, came out of the Sunday School movement. 1800. Written first as fast, fun and easy tunes for children, they later began to pick up more adult themes as Sunday School broadened out to include adults. These gospel songs were not written in formal styles like hymns. They were made popular by revival meetings and camp meetings. Gospel songs often have a refrain.

When people complain against contemporary music, they are really missing the point. We don't reverence music because it is old, or what we were used to when we heard it when we were young. All music begins somewhere. It is all contemporary when it is launched. Using music to reach souls is the idea. We should not be so quick to turn our hearts against it.

So, the song, Little Joe the Wrangler helps us bridge a cowboy song and a gospel song, both of which have deep roots in our heritage. It is fitting to consider our cowboy heritage here at First Baptist Church, Cuero. I consider it to be true that the first Chisolm Trail cattle drive started here in our county, just outside our city. However, if you go to the Fort Worth Stockyards and see their map of the Chisolm Trail, you will not see anything coming from Dewitt County. What a shame. Our history in the Texas Cattle movement goes back to the formation of the Spanish missions, according to Bill Foster. The cattle were brought in to support the missions. As the bison were killed off, the open range gave opportunity for the cattle to expand onto the range. After the civil war, the area was economically depressed. Yet, we had a great resource of cattle. This led to the cattle drive to get cattle to market. It also led to the railroads to help get them to market. The railroad led to the formation of our city, and thus, here we are as First Baptist Church, 140 years old.

III. The little prophet Micah sought to turn the herd of Israel in his day.

So, why do I want to share the story of Little Joe the Wrangler? Among the cowboys, he was the smallest of the figures. Here was a young lad who knew little about working cattle. Yet, during a stampede, he risks his life trying to turn the herd. He runs ahead of the herd trying to turn them back from the stampede. As little as he is, he is out in front on a dark stormy night.

And, what is a stampede? A stampede is madness. The herd is running in madness. They have not sense of where or what, they are just running. The whole herd could go over a gully and be lost. As it is, Little Joe's horse falls over the gully and he and Little Joe are lost.

Micah is the Little Joe of his day. He is a diminutive figure in the scheme of life in Israel and Judah of his day. He hails from a small village in Judah. He is a minor prophet, largely because his material is not as lengthy as the larger prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He also does not have access to the court, like Isaiah, so he can speak to the kings. Micah is a little guy trying to turn the herd of madness of his day.

Read Micah chapters 1-2.

NIVO Micah 1:1 The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah--the vision he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem.

² Hear, O peoples, all of you, listen, O earth and all who are in it, that the Sovereign LORD may witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

³ Look! The LORD is coming from his dwelling place; he comes down and treads the high places of the earth.

⁴ The mountains melt beneath him and the valleys split apart, like wax before the fire, like water rushing down a slope.

⁵ All this is because of Jacob's transgression, because of the sins of the house of Israel. What is Jacob's transgression? Is it not Samaria? What is Judah's high place? Is it not Jerusalem?

⁶ "Therefore I will make Samaria a heap of rubble, a place for planting vineyards. I will pour her stones into the valley and lay bare her foundations.

⁷ All her idols will be broken to pieces; all her temple gifts will be burned with fire; I will destroy all her images. Since she gathered her gifts from the wages of prostitutes, as the wages of prostitutes they will again be used."

⁸ Because of this I will weep and wail; I will go about barefoot and naked. I will howl like a jackal and moan like an owl.

⁹ For her wound is incurable; it has come to Judah. It has reached the very gate of my people, even to Jerusalem itself.

¹⁰ Tell it not in Gath; weep not at all. In Beth Ophrah roll in the dust.

¹¹ Pass on in nakedness and shame, you who live in Shaphir. Those who live in Zaanan will not come out. Beth Ezel is in mourning; its protection is taken from you.

¹² Those who live in Maroth writhe in pain, waiting for relief, because disaster has come from the LORD, even to the gate of Jerusalem.

¹³ You who live in Lachish, harness the team to the chariot. You were the beginning of sin to the Daughter of Zion, for the transgressions of Israel were found in you.

¹⁴ Therefore you will give parting gifts to Moresheth Gath. The town of Aczib will prove deceptive to the kings of Israel.

¹⁵ I will bring a conqueror against you who live in Mareshah. He who is the glory of Israel will come to Adullam.

¹⁶ Shave your heads in mourning for the children in whom you delight; make yourselves as bald as the vulture, for they will go from you into exile.

NIVO Micah 2:1 Woe to those who plan iniquity, to those who plot evil on their beds! At morning's light they carry it out because it is in their power to do it.

² They covet fields and seize them, and houses, and take them. They defraud a man of his home, a fellowman of his inheritance.

³ Therefore, the LORD says: "I am planning disaster against this people, from which you cannot save yourselves. You will no longer walk proudly, for it will be a time of calamity.

⁴ In that day men will ridicule you; they will taunt you with this mournful song: 'We are utterly ruined; my people's possession is divided up. He takes it from me! He assigns our fields to traitors.' "

⁵ Therefore you will have no one in the assembly of the LORD to divide the land by lot.

⁶ "Do not prophesy," their prophets say. "Do not prophesy about these things; disgrace will not overtake us."

⁷ Should it be said, O house of Jacob: "Is the Spirit of the LORD angry? Does he do such things?" "Do not my words do good to him whose ways are upright?"

⁸ Lately my people have risen up like an enemy. You strip off the rich robe from those who pass by without a care, like men returning from battle.

⁹ You drive the women of my people from their pleasant homes. You take away my blessing from their children forever.

¹⁰ Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place, because it is defiled, it is ruined, beyond all remedy.

¹¹ If a liar and deceiver comes and says, 'I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,' he would be just the prophet for this people!

¹² "I will surely gather all of you, O Jacob; I will surely bring together the remnant of Israel. I will bring them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock in its pasture; the place will throng with people.

¹³ One who breaks open the will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their king will pass through before them, the LORD at their head."

(Mic. 1:1-2:13 NIVO)

Micah is Little Joe the Wrangler trying to turn the herd during a stampede on a dark time in Israel's life. It is a stampede because the people are running headlong without sense unto a certain judgment of perdition. They are disregarding God's moral, spiritual and ethical laws.

1. Who will turn the herd from the stampede of spiritual corruption and immorality?

The high places of Samaria and Jerusalem is about idolatry and immorality. Idol worship was done on high places. Along with the idolatry, was open immorality. When you leave God, you leave the laws of God. It is not that they quit worship. They just changed worship to bring in the false gods and immoral practices.

Micah describes a movement that starts in Samaria and spreads down to Judah. Like a disease, the infection as moved from the

north to the south. And the people are stampeding toward the abandonment of faith in God. They run as a herd stampeding in the night to do the most popular things.

Is I not like our country today? People are running headlong into open acceptance of sexual deviant lifestyles as being normal. People think they are discovering themselves, when they are really being converted in their minds to falsehood. It's a stampede! It is madness!

Just this week, a group of ministers from various denominations came together to bless the opening of an abortion clinic. Ministers, priests! It is like the sons of Aaron blessing the burning of the infants in the fire for the gods of Molech and Chemosh. Priests giving blessing for murders, the taking of life so people can be immoral without restraint? It is madness!

For this, Micah says that God is coming. He is coming from Heaven to tread on the high places of Israel and Judah. God is coming to bring judgment and destruction. The herd left to run in the stampede will kill itself in its unrestraint. Sin left in unrestraint leads to destruction.

2. Who will turn the herd from the stampede of the abuse of the poor?

Micah also speaks to the unethical treatment of the poor by the rich. The rich lie on their beds at night thinking of how they can take advantage of the poor. Then, in the day, they use the power of their wealth to force the poor out of their homes.

In our day, people do the same. The raising of tax valuations on property places a hardship on the poor who cannot maintain their land. After the oil boom, the cost of land values have skyrocketed, even though the play is mostly gone. During the play, property rentals tripled, and they have not since come down. God speaks in the Scripture against pushing the poor off of their land. If you have wealth, do not use your power to take advantage over the poor. This leads to the way of destruction.

3. Who will turn the herd from plunging down into the abyss?

Micah is riding, trying to turn the herd from its madness. As a pastor, I too am trying to turn the herd from our culture's mad stampede into the abyss. The dark politics of our day are full of lies, violence and slander. Truth is trampled for ideology. And most people are not capable of thinking so they can see the falsehood that is before them. The poor are being used as pawns to get power into the hands of elitist billionaires. Once they have power, they will care nothing about the poor they have used.

Yet, most people are just following the herd running headlong down the banks to the abyss. They follow the sexual ideology that says that love is all we need, no matter what the form. It sounds so charming. However, God is coming on the clouds. The mountains melt like wax before Him. He comes not only to save. He comes to judge.

The herd is headed to the brink of disaster. Who will ride out to turn the herd?

Some of the people in Micah's day told him to stop prophesying that God would destroy the nation. "God is not like that." Yet, know that God did destroy both nations. He allowed them to fall because they turned away from God and did evil.

Some today are saying, "God is not like that." "God does not condemn sexual deviation." "Jesus never said anything against homosexuality, so He does not condemn it." Jesus condemned the abuse of divorce. When he did, he cited the Genesis statement in the Law, "God created them male and female;" and "the two shall become one flesh" (Gen. 1:27; 2:24). Yet, the herd says, there are no rules to sexuality. God approves all forms of love. Pandora's box is open and all sorts of demons are coming out. It is not just our nation which is plunging toward the Abyss. This is happening in other nations.

So, who will turn the herd in our day? Who will turn away from the headlong plunge into the abyss of popular sin culture? I for one am a voice, perhaps just a small voice, a small voice like Micah, a rider like Little Joe, trying to turn the herd from plunging into the Abyss.

Turn your heart to God and turn away from the thinking of this age. The Liar of this age has captured the minds of people to drag them down into the pit of destruction.

Turn, turn your heart to Jesus, God's Son. He never compromised God's will. He never stepped aside from truth. He is the Truth. Jesus is the narrow gate that leads to life with God. Yet the wide gate is open, and the maddened herd is running fast as it can through the gate, and down the hill to the ravine where lies its dreadful fall.

Will your turn today? Repent and turn to Jesus today!