



Video Story Transcript

Bartholomew

By: Storyteller MaryGay Ducey

Link to YouTube Video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cEAllqST-uw>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

Hello, I'm MaryGay Ducey. I'm going to tell you a story. This story is from when I was a pretty, small girl but not so small that I couldn't remember a good story even at the time. I was about in the fourth, fifth grade, maybe a little younger, maybe a little older. We belonged to a Presbyterian church. And the church had the equivalent of soccer camp or music camp, except in those days it was called Daily Vacation Bible School and it was free. So, my parents were very interested in that, in that activity. And you could go two weeks and then go two weeks more. They wanted us to do all four weeks. Every year it was the very same one, the very same camp, we had two projects. First, we made Joseph's Coat of Many Colors out of crepe paper. That took a long time because if you put one drop of liquid on crepe paper the entire coat disappears in front of your eyes. And the second one, was to make our Palestine home. Which was where people slept on the roof, and we put lots of sand up there, and we had little stick figures for our Palestine family. Every year same thing. We sang songs every day and camp, so-called, was held right in the sanctuary, which was a little magical because our preacher wasn't there. We started the day, everyday, singing, "Oh, do Lord, oh, do Lord, oh, do remember me." And they taught us The Disciples right away. But I always made a mistake. I was double the couple. Kind of. We'd sing, "There were 12 disciples. Jesus called to help him. Simon Peter, Andrew, James, his Brother John. Philip, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Thomas, Judas, (spits) and Bartholomew."

In that very sanctuary, while we have Bible School, there was a man named Bartholomew. He didn't have a last name. Not that I knew. He was a black man and he was a lay preacher in his own church on the weekends. He had, oh, 11 children. All of them were named for the disciples. And there was a Judy, the only girl. She was named after...well, Judy. So, every week we would talk to him because we had to choose a Bible verse, every

one of us, and were presented to the whole congregation, with our proud and sweating parents, at the end of those two weeks. That's a grave decision which one you chose. And somebody got, "Jesus wept," right away, which was the best and easiest. So, it took us a while and we made our many, many, many... oh, little bits of, of clay things and all sorts of strange papers and drawings. We didn't know what, really, we were doing but we had fun...except for that bible verse. We went home and talked to our parents but I talked to Bartholomew. My mom worked at the church sometimes and we would be there alone. And Bartholomew would have a great, big broom. He would sweep it around the floor; describe a great, giant circle. And I would follow him, just like a duckling. And say, "Bartholomew, you got a verse for me. You are a preacher."

He said, "Oh I have."

I said, "What is it?"

He said, "Oh, no. You have to choose your own verse. It has to mean something to you."

I said, "It will mean something to me to have it."

He said, "No, it doesn't work that way."

"So, how does it work?"

He said, "You choose one, tell me. I'll, I'll tell you whether I think it's right."

We have many kids in our school, our Bible School. One of them was called Piglet because his best friend was a bag of chips and he brought his best friend every day. Every day. Held it like a teddy bear. The kid named Kay Mullet. She was there. And somebody else named Ronnie. He was there. He cried every day. For years and years, he cried every day. But he learned his Bible verse faster than we did. I didn't know what to choose.

There were strange times at home, in the city. My dad and all the men at church kept talking about when they might come into our church. I didn't really know quite what they meant, but one night, I came home and there was a meeting of the elders of the church. All of them huddled around the kitchen table. And one of them said, "Well, I know when they come, if they try to come in, we'll just call the cops. You know, black and white. You're not supposed to be together in church. We'll just call the cops."

Ronny's daddy said, "No, I don't think we should call the cops. We just shouldn't be welcoming. Just close the doors."

My daddy said, "Well, let's see what happens." Could do this, could do that.

And the next day, I told Bartholomew what my Bible verse was. "Thou blowest nother, neither hot nor cold. And I shall spit thee out of my mouth." That was mine. It wasn't long before we were ready. Just about ready. As ready as children who are tired of Joseph's Coat of Many Colors and who want to go home early and don't want to listen to the sermon can be. Two days before that service, I waited in the pews with Bartholomew and I said, "Bartholomew, you got a church?"

He said, "Oh yes!"

I said, "When am I going to your church?"

He said, "I don't think that's going to happen for a while."

I said, "Why?"

He said, "Well, sometimes people don't feel comfortable visiting other churches."

I said, "I feel comfortable."

He said, "I know you do. Someday you will feel real comfortable and all of us will."

I said, "Bartholomew, you've got, you've got your kids?"

He said, "Oh, yah, I do"

"So what do you guys do at home?"

He said, "We sing and we dance and we have fun."

I said, "I'd like to come there."

He said, "Well, someday, maybe."

"I've got my verse." And I told him.

His broom stopped right at the end of the verse and he said, "Well, MaryGay, that's quite a verse." That's all he said.

The day before, on Saturday, the men met again and said, "I hear they're coming pretty soon." I wasn't sure what that meant.

The next day, we lined up and sat on the edge, the edge of a stage, that functioned as a kind of an altar for us. Dressed in our Joseph's Coats of Many Colors, crinkling and snapping, holding little cups of Kool-Aid, and praying, truly, that we wouldn't drop them. And rehearsing our verses. Piggy, his verse was, "Thine appetite shall smite thee like a knife." Kay Mullet's was, "Patience in all things." And then of course, there was the requisite, "Jesus wept." And then, mine. I was about to say it. It was a hot day. It's always hot in New Orleans. And the doors are closed. When there was a welcome, welcome breeze. The doors at the back, *whoosh*, had opened. And they had arrived. They were there, in my church. First standing, right at the front entrance, and then, very quietly coming in, coming in. It was Bartholomew and all his children.

And he said, "Be sure to let a stranger in. If you don't, then you miss an angel unawares."

And they began to sing, "*Wade in the water. Wade in the water. Wade in the water, children. You, wade in the water. Wade in the water. God's gonna trouble the water.*"

People started to get up and talk among themselves. My dad stood up as if to go, and then, Bartholomew put his hands up and he said, "There are many, many mansions. Many mansions in his kingdom. Many." And his children, all dress so beautifully, turned and Bartholomew turned. And he looked out into the faces of the congregation looking, to find his place, in the House of the Lord.