

Thunderhead

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W.N.W. FEATURES

THE STORY THUS FAR: Thunderhead, the only white horse ever foaled on the Goose Bar ranch in Wyoming, is certainly a throwback to his great grandfather, a wild stallion called the Albino. His 15-year-old owner, Ken McLaughlin, hopes he will become a famous racer. Thunderhead, very fast but difficult to handle, is entered in a race meet in Idaho. On a trip into the mountains Thunderhead breaks away and joins a band of wild horses. He kills the leader, the Albino, and takes the herd for himself. Ken's father, Rob, tells Ken that Thunder and Go, a filly, will be raced instead of Thunderhead. In a sudden cold snap both Banner and Thunderhead bring their herds to the stables.

CHAPTER XXV

"The two bands of mares and colts are all mixed up in both corrals—eating nie out of house and home—eighty head of horses! Gus and I'll have to spend half the night sorting them out—putting them through the chute—Banner took some of Thunderhead's mares and put them with his."

A look of consternation dawned on Nell's face. "He did! Why, Rob! Why, that might start a fight!" "It might and it did!" Rob reached for bread.

"Oh, Rob! What did you do?" "We beat them apart. Just in time too—before they really went berserk. A little later and we wouldn't have done it. One of them would be dead now."

Nell was stunned into silence. Rob ate hungrily, then added more quietly, "And it wouldn't be Thunderhead."

"Nell said nothing to that. No. Certainly not the powerful young creature who had overcome such an antagonist as the Albino—No—it would have been Banner."

"Rob," she said quietly a little later, "do you think they're safe now?"

"I do not," Rob shoved back his chair, went over to the stove and stood with his back to it while he filled and lit his pipe.

He took a few puffs, drew the smoke into his lungs, felt the calming effect of it, and finally took his pipe out of his mouth and held it, his eyes fixed in a brown study on the floor and said, "Banner will never be safe again."

"But—but—" stammered Nell, "we can send Thunderhead away again—he'll go back to that valley with his mares."

"And in every storm he'll bring them home," said Rob quietly. "He's done that all his life, he'll continue to do it."

And for a while there was nothing to be heard in the cosy kitchen but the whine of the wind around the chimneys, and a sudden furious onslaught rattling the windows.

Pauly crawled out from under the stove, stretched slowly and sensuously, curling up her coral tongue, then seated herself and began a leisurely and thorough bath.

"No," said Rob again with a sharp sigh, raising his eyes to the ceiling of the room and taking a few more gulps of his pipe, "Banner will never be safe—no till Thunderhead is dead—or gelded."

A sound burst from Nell. "But Rob—Ken!" And at that Rob went wild again.

"I'm thinking of Ken too!" he shouted. "Do you think I like to do this? Now, when the boy has done better, achieved more, made me prouder of him than I ever have been in my life? If there were any way to get rid of that stallion—get him hundreds of miles away from here—turn him over to someone else—But who would buy him or accept him as a gift? He's no use to anyone."

Rob knocked the ashes out of his pipe, slipped it in his pocket, stamped across the kitchen to the porch and started to get himself into his outdoor rig. Woolen trousers into overshoes. Canvas trousers over both, tied at the ankles. Sheepskin lined lumberjack, felt-lined gloves, and deep, padded Scotch winter cap. With his hand on the door knob he paused and looked back at Nell.

"I would be smart," he said slowly, "to put a bullet through him and haul him away. Ken would never know but what he was still up there in that valley."

Nell made no answer and waited for Rob to open the door and leave. But he did not leave. She looked at him and saw that he was looking at her, waiting. There was a certain expression on his face. He was suffering. He was furious. He was stamped. He saw only one way out—he didn't want to hurt her, through Ken. He was asking her, and waiting for her answer.

Her heart gave a terrible leap, and she felt weak, and sat down at the table. He was serious about this, and he had put it up to her. She leaned her head on her hands.

Not to judge this like a sentimental woman—to judge it fairly like a judge. No, like someone who has the real responsibility and whose duty it is to find the safest way out for everybody. She could see the years stretch ahead, the constant annoyance and expense to Rob of having these wild mares and their colts brought down for feed and shelter in storms. At last they would feel that the ranch belonged to them. Thunderhead was oriented to this place, there was no way to prevent his coming, except by a sustained program of discouragement and unkindness that

Rob would not be capable of, to say nothing of Ken. And lastly, the worst thing of all, it was only a matter of time before Thunderhead would kill Banner.

Nell went to bed and sat reading, but she didn't know what the words meant, for she was listening for a shot. At last she fell asleep, and Rob came in and undressed and put out the lights without waking her.

But there had been no shot, for Rob had thought of another way—just a chance of a way—a very slim chance.

In the morning the storm was still raging. Rob rose early, saddled Shorty and rode over to the telegraph station to discover the state of the weather and roads westward. It was worst right here on Sherman Hill but snow ploughs were keeping the highways open and busses were running. Fifty miles to the west no snow was falling.

He rode back and explained his idea to Nell. If he could take Thunderhead in the trailer to Saginaw Falls—if he could make the trip in two days, they would arrive on October twenty-third, the day before the Greenway race. There was still time. And if Thunderhead should give a good account of himself in the race, someone would buy him and take him far away and everybody would be happy. After all, this was what he had been trained for.

"But the storm, Rob! And the roads! And those awful passes! Taking a horse down the Divide in a trailer in such weather as this!"

Ken added, "Sometimes he starts bad. Don't worry about that. He might start with a rough, hard gallop. That's not his real running gait. Just beat hell out of him. Fight him. Make him mind you. He can catch up with anything once he hits his gait."

When Ken moved out to the track, there was a small crowd strung along the rail, several of them holding stop watches in their hands.

But this was not one of the times when Thunderhead "started bad." The familiarity of the light figure on his back, the well-loved voice, and those feather hands—Thunderhead went from an easy canter without a hitch into his extraordinary floating run, and Perry Gunston's narrow, tense eyes narrowed still more.

He glanced at the watch in his hand, looked at Dickson, shook his head, and put the watch away.

Dickson exploded, "Ker-r-rist! You don't see a horse run like that! You just dream about it!"

"Gosh Almighty!" exclaimed one of the others, "he's got the Greenway purse in his pocket!"

"Looks like Ken's sold his horse," said Gunston.

It was not until Ken sat down for breakfast with his father in the grill room of the Club House that he learned all the details of Thunderhead's return. It seemed to him more dreadful even than he had thought. The stallion had not just come home alone, as he often had before, he had returned with the entire band of mares and colts—his most cherished possessions—and had trustfully put them in the keeping of the Goose Bar corrals. And now, if his own plans went through, and his father's plans, Thunderhead would never see his mares again.

With head down and eyes on his plate, Ken fiddled with his fried eggs.

"Where do you think they all went—the mares and colts?" he asked after a moment.

"Back to their valley," said Rob. "That's their home. They would drift back there—and—" he broke off.

"And—?" prompted Ken, raising his eyes.

"I was going to say," said Rob, "wait for Thunderhead. They'd be expecting him to come back, of course, and take care of them. Why aren't you eating your breakfast?"

Ken ceased all pretense, laid his fork down and leaned back. It was rather a garbled speech that poured out—about Thunderhead's new affection for him. His trust. And the way he was so terribly lonely for his mares and his valley, and right now when, for the first time, the horse had accepted him and turned toward him as if he was a friend—right now, Ken was playing the part of an enemy to him—pot a friend at all.

Rob listened with an impassive face, eating his hearty breakfast with zest, buttering his toast, filling his cup with more hot coffee, glancing around the room, his head cocked as if he was hearing all that was going on as well as the words that came hesitatingly from Ken.

He flashed one lightning glance at his boy. He saw the shadowed eyes, and the pallor and the thin drawn lips that had become familiar signs of Ken's heartache.

Finally he said sharply, "You've been moving heaven and earth for three years to make a racer out of this horse and now you're changing your mind. Can't you stay put? Why in hell do you have to wobble about like that?"

Ken thought that if his father could only see the pictures that moved slowly behind each other in his own mind, he wouldn't ask such things. Right now Ken was seeing the picture of the way Thunderhead had—so trustfully—laid his head against him and placed his whole misery and longing in Ken's hands to straighten out for him.

Ken spoke hesitatingly. "I guess it's just—that you always say yourself, dad—what we do to horses when we make them do what we want, instead of what they were naturally meant to do."

Gunston suggested that Ken should give the horse a run. He might be

willfully to eat after he'd had a bit of exercise. Dickson came running up, anxious to inspect the racer he was to ride that afternoon.

"Maybe Dickson had better ride him," suggested Ken to Gunston, "so he can get used to him."

But Gunston decided that Ken had better take him out for his first run. They saddled the horse and Ken mounted him and moved slowly off toward the track, Dickson close beside Ken, and Gunston and Pratt following.

"The jockey was firing questions at Ken. Ken answered quietly. No, he doesn't mind the whip. Sometimes you got to beat hell out of him. . . . No, he's not hard-mouthed. You can guide him without any rein at all. He knows where you want to go. . . . Sure, he's got a chance to win the purse. . . . he can win it, if he wants to, there just isn't any doubt about it. He can run faster than any other horse, I tell you. It's just if he wants to. . . . Well—if he takes a notion. . . . if he's in a bad temper. . . . if he's got anything else on his mind."

As he said the last words, Ken looked uneasily off at the horizon. Dickson looked anxiously at the horse.



"And—?" prompted Ken, raising his eyes.

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL Lesson

By HAROLD L. LUNDQUIST, D. D. Of The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago. Released by Western Newspaper Union.

Lesson for November 11

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THE FRUITS OF PUBLIC WORSHIP

LESSON TEXT—Isaiah 6:1-8; Ephesians 5:15-21.

GOLDEN TEXT—Praise ye the Lord. I will praise the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.—Psalm 111:1.

The center of every community should be the church. The house set aside for the worship of God is the gathering place of His people. There they find fellowship as they meet their Lord. He is in their midst exalted and mighty, but ready to enter every humble and contrite heart.

Our lesson shows us how the worship of God brings blessed results as His people meet.

I. Recognizing God's Presence (Isa. 6:1-4).

King Uzziah, who had begun well but had forgotten God, was at the end of his life a leper because of his sin and dying in disgrace. Israel which had known unprecedented prosperity under God's blessing now hardened its heart nationally against God and was also about to go into eclipse. God needed a man to speak for Him in such an hour, to bring to His people a message of judgment and also of blessed invitation. To prepare that man, the great Isaiah, God gave a remarkable manifestation of His glory and power.

It is essential that the man who speaks for God should first see the Lord high and lifted up and to hear of His holiness and glory. The negative tone of the present-day message, the lack of enthusiasm and interest in holy things, the low standards of personal holiness, the failure to preach boldly the truth regarding God's holy standards are to be explained by the fact that there has been no vision of the eternal holiness and glory of God.

II. Renewing by God's Power (vv. 5-8).

To see the holiness of God is to be immediately conscious of one's own sin and unworthiness. The obvious conclusion which one draws from that fact is that anyone who is proud, who is not concerned about his own sins and the sins of his people, is living far from God and has either never known or has forgotten about His divine holiness.

Isaiah spoke of the pollution of his lips, thereby confessing that his heart was not right. Whereof the heart is full, thereof speaketh the mouth, for we read that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. 12:34). Remember that even though Isaiah was a believer he recognized the need of cleansing.

"Then" (v. 6)—what an important word! When Isaiah called out in humble confession, "then" he was cleansed. The turning point is right at that place for any life. Only when we come to the place of confession and contrition which Isaiah knew, can we expect the Lord to send the cleansing fire and the enabling power.

Reformation, turning over a new leaf, character development, all commendable in their place, are not sufficient. There must be a divine cleansing of the life if there is to be a commission to service.

III. Realizing God's Will (Eph. 5: 15-17).

The ministry of the Church of God can serve no greater purpose than helping men and women to know the will of God. That wisdom (v. 17) comes through the teaching of God's Word and through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, both in the church and in the individual.

The Church (and that means every member) is to recognize that the evil day in which we live is a challenge to holy and effective living. Time is not to be wasted, or casually used. It is to be redeemed—every moment to count for God.

The walk of the believer is to be circumspect, that is, with "pains-taking attention to details, under a sense of their importance," not a foolish walk, but a wise one.

IV. Receiving God's Spirit (5:18-21).

God wishes to fill His children with the Holy Spirit in such mighty overwhelming power that they are entirely under His control. Such Spirit-filled believers find their joy and satisfaction in the fellowship of those who sing the praises of God from the heart.

Being a Christian is not a depressing, sorrowful business. It makes you glad. It is God's people who sing and make melody. Some of us who have failed to appreciate this truth should begin now to "get happy" about our religion.

The Holy Spirit leads believers into a life of humility and self-denial (v. 21). Pride and self-exaltation are definitely ruled out.

Do not neglect the note of thanksgiving found in verse 20. The Church of Christ has so infinitely much for which to be thankful that actually ingratitude is a sin. How much blessing is lost because of it! Let us "give thanks always for all things."



WHEN THE DOCTOR COMES MARCHING HOME

It will be nice to phone a doctor's office again and find he is not in Europe, Asia or Africa.

So many physicians were taken into the war that the chances have been at least four to one that when you went to one's office you would see a sign "Out to Global War, Return Ultimately" on the door.

The few doctors left at home were harder to see than a world series.

The lines were almost as long, and some patients arrived the night before and sat on soap boxes all night in order to get in first in the morning.

Patients had to wait so long for their turn, even when they got inside the house, that they often outgrew the original ailment and developed new symptoms during the wait.

If a patient didn't have high blood pressure when he entered a doctor's office he had it by the time he left.

These were tough years for hypochondriacs. When they imagined they were sick they also had to imagine they could get a physician.

It was tough on the doctors too. They were as overworked as subway guards in a rush hour. Their one regret was that they were unable to feel four pulses at a time.

Many a medic was in worse shape than the patients. One of the laughs of wartime was a doctor-telling a patient "You're working too hard. You've got to take it easy."

When you finally got out of the waiting room and into a doctor's office you were brushed off faster than a man on a revolving floor. You left too dizzy to remember what he said. He was too dizzy to remember what was wrong with you.

It was nothing unusual to have a doctor greet you with "What is your ailment? I'll give you ten seconds."

Personally we were in a tough spot; five of our six doctors were in Asia. We always try to keep a second string team, but they were away, also. The only one left looked so run down we couldn't bear to see him. But one day we dropped in.

"What's the matter with you?" he asked.

"I'm a nervous wreck," we replied. "From what?" he asked. "From watching you try to handle your business," we replied.

Then we gave him some pills he had once prescribed for us, told him he looked terrible and warned him to take it easy or he might need medical attention.

EASILY SATISFIED (With Apologies)

Man wants but little here below—A shorter day and longer dough—A streamlined home with gadgets new—A limousine and beach car, too; The latest television set—A carefree attitude on debt—A swimming pool in blue or pink—And lots of room to sit and think.

A town house and a little place out in the country, just in case—A motor boat for summer time—And winter in a warmer climate—A "walkout" every little while—To work off that attack of bile—A banner to tote here and there—Proclaiming "This Shop is Unfair."

Some people's wants are extra high—They seek the pie up in the sky; I merely seek to get my share—With just a little bit to spare; Some seek the apple and the core—For tip-top blessings they would war; I'm contented if I net As much as the directors get.

The International Ladies' Garment Workers plan their own radio stations. The United Auto Workers and the CIO Clothing Workers have similar projects. This alarms us. It may mean an aerial picket line which radio addicts will have to cross in order to reach Jack Benny or Gabe Heatter.

If President Truman succeeds in plowing a straight furrow in Washington he will be the first man ever to do it on a merry-go-round.

In a milk strike we assume the strikers always threaten to stay out till the cows come home.

From Harrisburg, Ill., comes a report that the old fashioned wooden barrel is coming back. Fine. The way things are pointing in this country, it is good to know they will be available for street wear again.

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