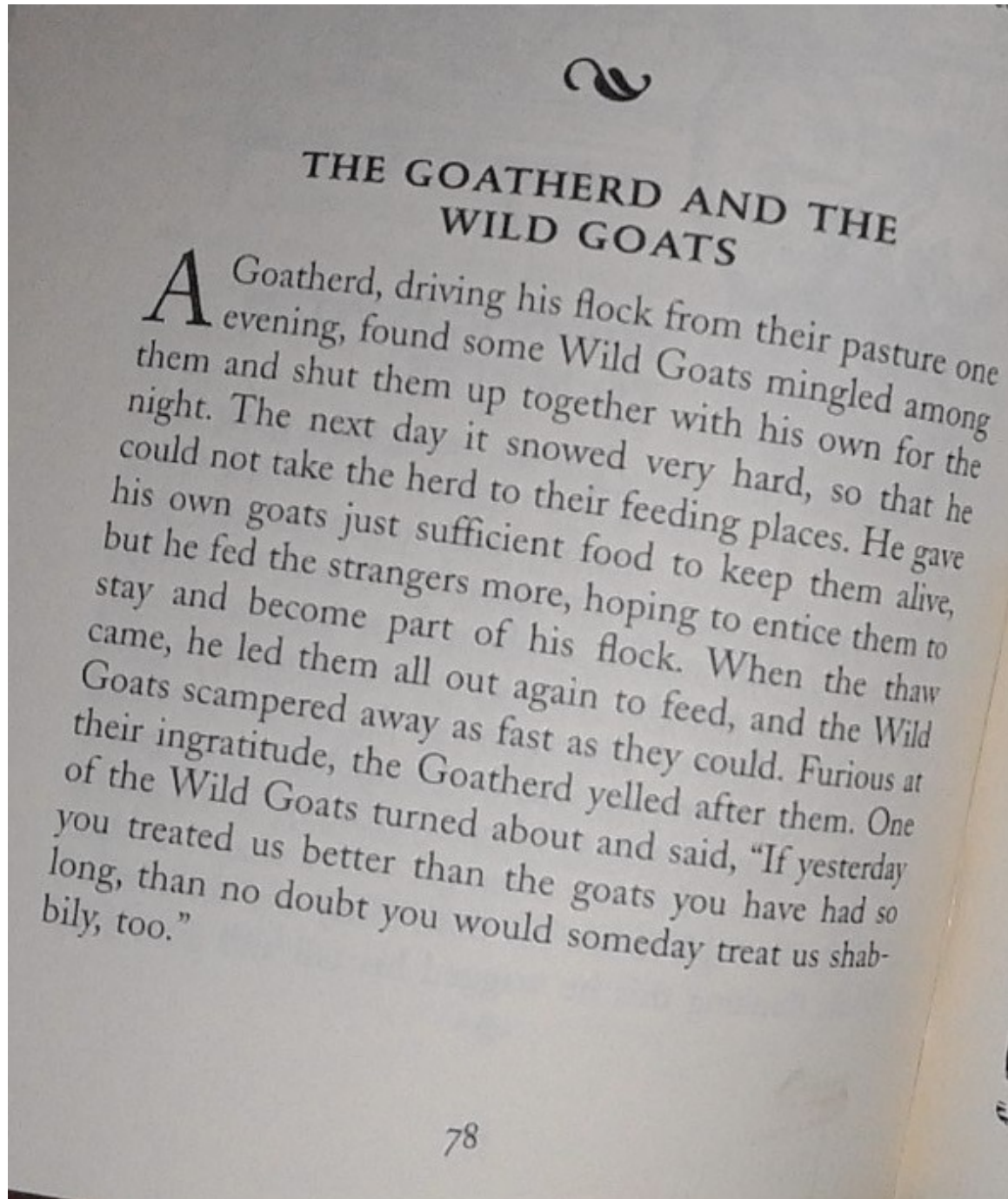


A Sermon on Aesop's Fable "The Goatherd and the Wild Goats"

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for March 26th, 2023 (and beyond)

The following text is from "The Fables of Aesop" published by Book-of-the-Month Club, Inc, New York, 1995.



There are many variations of the above fable with somewhat different interpretations all attributed to Aesop. You can find other translations/interpretations that differ from the

above and among themselves at the following links: <https://read.gov/aesop/096.html>, <https://fablesfaesop.com/the-goatherd-and-the-wild-goats.html>, and http://teach.files.bbc.co.uk/schoolradio/29_goatherd_wild_goats.pdf . One difference between the one from the book page above and the <https://read.gov/aesop/096.html> version is that in the <https://read.gov/aesop/096.html> version it was a stormy day rather than evening and the goatherd intruded or invited himself and his flock into a cave already occupied by the wild goats rather than providing food and shelter of his own with no storm as in the above story. With the <https://read.gov/aesop/096.html> version, the wild goats' response doesn't make as much sense because in essence the goatherd may have been more generous with sharing his food in reciprocity for providing shelter. The moral stated or provided at the end of the story in all versions, misses the reciprocity element. The moral is “It is unwise to treat old friends badly for the sake of new ones.” according to <https://read.gov/aesop/096.html>. And, in the book there is no moral provided for that particular story. The moral provided at that link though doesn't make sense in full context where the wild goats shared their shelter and were rewarded with food and then were invited to join the domesticated herd which they refused offending the goatherd resulting in their not recognizing the attempt at reciprocity for generously sharing their shelter. And, that only makes sense with the cave scenario, otherwise the haughtiness of the wild goats makes more sense in the physical volume a picture of which is embedded above.

Also, according to online sources, Aesop likely never even existed and the stories attributed to Aesop were from oral traditions that they created a creator for to put morality tales in one volume or for easier citation/reference. Source: <https://iep.utm.edu/aesop> . Does that make them any less worthy of reading?

In the embedded version above, the wild goats almost seem ungrateful, but suspect trickery. In that version the goatherd is like a cult leader love-bombing new recruits who are too savvy to fall for it as a result of their being very observant and suspicious. It is almost reminiscent of a feast day where all are welcome to come celebrate and new recruits are celebrated for their newness and then introduced to the daily grind. One could say the moral is to watch out for “bait and switch” offers in that version.

I read the book version as having the moral “To each their own” since the wild goats tried domestication for the night and then decided they preferred wildlife to domestication. And, the goatherd revealed his own ulterior motives by being angry at their free will choice rather than generous in accepting their decision and refusal to join the domesticated herd even after his free sample of that lifestyle. The cave version changes everything though, including the moral, in my opinion. There is no primary source to check given the uncertainty on whether Aesop existed and what the original oral version intended before many retellings oral and written with varying interpretations in text and meaning.

I still enjoy them and find some meaning there. I hope you do too.

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

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