



Saving the Official's Son

John 4:26-54

Algie walked back and forth across the blazing hot sand, his eyes scanning the waves carefully. He was on the look out for Popsy to return from his long swim from Easter Island. Popsy was long overdue and his family was beginning to worry. Being a Bonzai and, like the rest of the family, having made a life-long promise to rescue the others from danger, Algie knew he had to help Popsy if he was in trouble. He sent Mumsy, Chauncey, Pepper Pelican, and 800 Pound Gorilla to look for Popsy at different places around the island. Each one was instructed to signal to the others over the shortwave radio if they spotted Popsy.

"Wahhhhhhhh!" Pepper's cry filled the air as Algie spotted the pelican plunging towards him from high above. Pepper smacked hard unto the ground; feathers flew all around him.

"Pepper! Are you all right? Speak to me!" Algie yelled as he ran to help the big-beaked bird.

Pepper flipped over, spit out the sand in his beak and rubbed the side of his head. "Oww," he moaned. "I should remember to apply my brakes before landing."

Algie leaned over and examined him. "Are you all right?"

Pepper stood up and shook the sand from his wings. "I am now! But, I was just saved from a fate worse than death!"

"Huh? What happened?" Algie asked, wondering if the Pelican's landing on his head might have affected his thinking. Then, noticing an interesting piece of jewelry around Pepper's neck, he added, "And where did you get that vegetable necklace?"

Pepper held up the necklace. "That's all part of the story! You see, I was on my way to the beach to look for Popsy when I was captured by eight gigantic pirates!"

"Pirates?! On our island?!" Algie exclaimed, very surprised.

Pepper nodded. "Yes, I think they crashed their boat running from the law!"

Algie looked around as if expecting to see the pirates running down the beach ready to tackle him. "Well, where are they now?"

Pepper waved a wing. "I'm getting to that. You see, I was flying over when I noticed a fire. I thought it might be Popsy signaling for a rescue, so I flew down to get a closer look. And they caught me in a net!"

"No!" Algie exclaimed. "What did those scallywags want with you?"

"They wanted to eat me! I'm quite tasty, you know," Pepper noted proudly. "They seasoned me up and covered me with veggies and put an apple in my mouth and put this big pot of boiling water on the fire. I was just seconds away from being Pelican stew!"

"No!" Algie exclaimed again. "How did you escape?"

"That's the good part. At the last second, just as they were about to lower me into the boiling water, I started to pray..." Pepper demonstrated by kneeling down on the sand. "And, just I was about to give up hope, I heard this voice say, 'Unhand that Pelican, you filthy scoundrels!' It was..."

"Popsy to the rescue!" Both Algie and Pepper yelled out as Pepper jumped up and posed like a superhero.

"That's right! He jumped on the whole gang and wrassled them to the ground and tickled their bellies!" Pepper plopped down on the ground like he was holding down the robbers.

"All eight of them?! That's my Popsy!" Algie stated proudly.

"He was getting the best of them too until one of them picked up a log and hit Popsy over the head!" Pepper picked up a branch in the excitement of his reenactment and smacked Algie on the back of the head with it.

Algie yelled, "OWW!!! Hey, that hurt!"

"Like I thought," Pepper squawked. "You Bonzais have very thick skulls! Anyway, they were just about to tie him up when I heard this high pitched voice shout, 'Bonzais to the rescue!'"

"Mumsy to the rescue!" Algie said excitedly.

"You got it! Mumsy came flying in and started kung foo-ing everyone in sight!" Pepper demonstrated the karate chop Mumsy had used on the pirates.

"That's our Mumsy!" Algie said proudly.

"And then just when one pirate turned on Mumsy, I heard this piercing jungle cry like this: 'Ah-ah-ah-ah!' and 800 Pound Gorilla dropped out of the trees and bopped him on the head! Just then Chauncey flew in and tied them up and radioed for the coast guard who came and locked them up! Your family rescued me from the jaws of death!" Pepper finished quickly.

"Well, we Bonzais have made a life-long promise to rescue each other from danger!" Algie paused as a thought entered his mind. "You know, this story reminds me of Jesus!"

Pepper looked confused. "It does? Jesus defeated eight pirates?" Algie laughed. "No! Of course not! He rescued a boy from death."

"No!" Pepper exclaimed. "Well, I love adventure stories! Read it to me!"

"Certainly, I'll get my Bible out!" Algie reached into his pocket and pulled out a little, brown Bible. "Here it is. Once when Jesus was in Cana, there was a royal official in Capernaum

whose son who was very sick. He went to Jesus and begged Him to come heal his son, who was close to death. The royal official said, 'Sir, come down before my child dies.'"

"Oh no! What did Jesus do?" Pepper asked. Algie continued reading. "Jesus replied, "You may go. Your son will live.'"

"Well, what did the official do?" The pelican asked, full of curiosity. "The Bible says, He took Jesus at His word and left."

"What?! He just left?! Just like that?!" Pepper questioned, not believing that the man just trusted Jesus' word without demanding that Jesus return with him to touch his son.

Algie nodded and said, with a wave of his hand, "Just like that. On the way home his servants came running to tell him his son was alive. The boy was healed! It was a miracle!"

Pepper jumped up and cheered, flapping his wings. "I can't believe it! It's a miracle!"

"A miracle!" Algie agreed. "But, that's not the best part!"

Pepper shook his head in disbelief, "There's more?" He asked.

"There's more! The father asked what time his son had been healed. They told him and the Bible says, 'Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So, he and all his household believed!'" Algie added, "Jesus only had to speak a word and it was done! We can always count on Jesus to keep his promise!"

"That's incredible!" Pepper said.

"Yes!" Algie explained. "That's what the man's family thought. When they saw this miracle they all believed in Jesus!"

"That's incredible, too!" Pepper added with a loud squawk.

Algie agreed. "Well, you know what we Bonzais say, 'It's incredible but true, what the God of Wonders can do!'"

Algie and Pepper stood for a moment, thinking about the story when Algie suddenly looked around and asked, "Hey Pepper, talking about heroes, where did you leave the ones that saved your life from the stew pot?"

Pepper suddenly remembered that he was sent to deliver a message to Algie. "Oh no! I'm supposed to tell you to get in the jeep and pick them up. Mumsy's not going to be happy! She said to hurry!"

"Oh! We better go!" Algie could just picture his mother, standing in the middle of the jungle, millions of mosquitoes buzzing around head, with her hands on her hips wondering where they were. Algie ran towards the shed where the jeep was parked; Pepper sailed through the air beside him. "You fly on ahead. I will follow you in the jeep. Let's go pick up our family, the conquering heroes."

Moments later, the two were speeding through the jungle on a mission of their own to rescue the other Bonzais from the dangers of the swampy forest.