

**Justice Sunday 2013**  
**Children's Story/Time for All Ages**  
**Prepared by Rev. John Gibb Millspaugh**

Note to worship leaders: share these texts with service musicians in advance if possible — often musicians are able to enhance the telling of a story at its key moments.

**Option 1: “What’s the Better Price?”**

By John Gibb Millspaugh

Once upon a time in a land far away, or five days ago and just around the corner from here, a queen was planning a royal banquet. She had summoned her wisest counselor to advise her on arranging the feast.

Her wisest counselor’s name was Glob Gilly Bobulous. Yes, it’s a long name. Try saying it. “Glob Gilly Bobulous.” His name was so long and so funny that his friends never called him that. He had a nickname. Since his name was Glob Gilly *Bobulous*, his friends just called him . . . Glob Gilly.

The queen said, “My dear Glob Gilly, have you found any village capable of supplying my royal meal?”

Glob Gilly Bobulous replied, “Your Royal Majesty, I have searched the entire queendom to find the best village. I have found two villages that fit the bill: Snurptown and Hillville. Both Hillville and Snurptown are known around the queendom for their excellent offerings. Each village can provide the finest apple wine [show two identical vessels of wine] and your three favorite dishes: taco salad, bi bim bap, and salted lemonade pie [show two identical trays or baskets of food]. Every day for the past three weeks, I have tested the offerings of each village, and every day they have been equally delicious.”

The queen’s mouth was watering in anticipation. “I cannot wait to try these yummy delicacies myself!” she said. “Tell me, is there any difference at all between the food from the two villages?”

“Only this,” said Glob Gilly Bobulous. “Snurptown is much closer to your castle. You know well the roads to get there and have traveled them many times. You know Snurptown’s farmers, cooks, and merchants, and they know you. And I must point out that Snurptown will sell you the food you desire slightly more cheaply than the second village.”

“I think I have heard all I need to hear!” said the Queen. “Snurptown is closer, I know more about it, and the queendom would pay a lower price for its food!”

“Not so fast, Your Majesty, if you please,” said Glob Gilly. “Yes, as you say in your wisdom, Snurptown is closer than Hillville. Yes, Snurptown is more familiar than Hillville. But although its food is slightly cheaper, I suspect the queendom would pay a higher price for its food.”

The Queen looked confused. “Snurptown’s food is cheaper, but the queendom would pay a higher price for it? What are you talking about, Glob Gilly Bobulous?”

Glob Gilly replied, “Did you pause to ask yourself why Snurptown’s food is cheaper than Hillville’s? Hillville, on the other hand, harvests its crops by paying fair wages. Snurptown, the closer village, forces its poorest citizens to harvest its crops, and pays them next to nothing. In some cases, it pays them nothing at all.”

“Is that how Snurptown grows more food than Hillville?” asked the queen. “Enslaving its workers?”

“Yes, and not only that. Snurptown pours chemicals into the ground to get more food to grow out of it, but those same chemicals hurt the forests and animals who live nearby. Hillville uses no chemicals, instead growing crops together that like to grow together. Even though Hillville doesn’t always grow as much food as Snurptown, Hillville’s forests and animals are thriving.”

The queen said, “So Hillville’s food costs more because they grow it in a way that takes care of the land animals around the farms. I never knew that, or even wondered about it before.”

“Finally,” Glob Gilly continued, “Snurptown villagers use the money they earn to enslave more people and buy more poisonous chemicals. Hillville citizens use the money they earn to build schools, libraries, and hospitals.”

The queen drummed her fingers on the arm of her throne. “Hmm. Snurptown enslaves people, and Hillville pays a fair wage. Snurptown poisons its surrounding woods and its creatures, while Hillville cares for the land. Snurptown focuses only on profits. Hillville focuses not only on profits, but also on providing other human goods like libraries, schools, and hospitals.”

“Yes, Your Majesty,” said Glob Gilly.

The queen looked thoughtful. “I keep thinking about how little I know about Hillville. It seems like it might take more effort, at least at the beginning, to get to know its farmers, cooks, and merchants. I already know a lot about Snurptown. Plus, its food is cheaper.”

“Yes, my queen. But think of what price you want the queendom to pay. Which village asks the better price?”

### **Questions for reflection:**

1. What did Glob Gilly Bobulous mean when he asked the queen, “Which village asks the better price?”

2. Why might the queen decide to buy the food from Snurptown? From Hillville?
3. Would you rather live in Snurptown or Hillville? Live in a world full of Snurptowns or Hillvilles?

### **Option Two: “The Party”**

Source unknown; adapted by Rev. John Gibb Millspaugh

Four friends decided to throw a party to celebrate each person on the planet, including each of them, and the rest of nature, including animals and plants and everything. Each person took on a different part of party planning. Keiko said she'd handle the food. Olive would arrange the music. Francisco would do the decorations. Rita said she'd coordinate. What does that mean? She'd make sure it all got done just right.

So, a few days before the party, Rita called Keiko to ask how the food was coming along. Keiko said, “Well, everybody loves nachos, so I was thinking I'd swing by the grocery store on the way to the party and pick up some chips and fixings.”

Rita said, “What?!? Nachos? No! No, that will never do. We should have a giant, triple-layer chocolate-fudge-brownie cake so big it needs its own table! Wow, that was a close one. I'm glad I called you. Don't worry about it, Keiko, I'll take care of the food.”

Keiko said, “Oh. Well, okay.”

Then Rita called Francisco, who said for decorations he had borrowed some laptop computers, and would set them up to project slideshows — on walls, on the ceiling, on the floor — of different nature scenes and people from all over the world, which he said would set the perfect mood for a party.

Rita said, “What?!? No, this is a nature party. Actual plants and animals would be much better. You know, forsythias, hedgehogs, that kind of thing. I could gather some.”

Francisco said, “But you know I love laptops and gadgets and things. And I was supposed to do decorations.”

Rita said, “Hmm. Well, we could have electronics, I suppose. Maybe a strobe light, and a laser show, and a spotlight that follows me around the room wherever I go. Don't worry, I'll take care of it.”

Last there was music. Olive said she would bring her favorite music from home, from her favorite band, called the Beatles. Olive sang to Rita over the phone, “I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together. Goo goo ga joob!” Rita said, “I don't know what that's supposed to mean, but it sounds weird and this is supposed to be the best party ever! We should have live music! We should book Justin Beiber and Miley Cyrus and Lady Gaga. Don't worry Olive, I'll take care of it.”

So Rita worked very hard all day, and all night, and all through the next day. Finally it was evening, time for the party, and everything had come together exactly as hoped. Rita had the

giant chocolate-fudge-brownie cake, and the forsythias and hedgehogs and laser show and spotlight that followed her around wherever she went. And as she waited for her friends to arrive she made small talk with Justin and Miley and . . . Lady. Which was cool for about five minutes. But half an hour went by, then an hour, and her friends never showed up. Soon the performers left and the hedgehogs wandered away and it was just Rita all alone with the forsythias and the laser show and a melting chocolate cake.

So she pulled out her cell phone and texted her friends this message: “I messed up. We were going to have a nature party celebrating nature and our group, each one of us. I thought I knew what was best for everybody. But I forgot what was most important. Each of us has something special only *we* can bring to the party, and the party just wouldn’t be the same if any of us planned it alone. Keiko, I hope you’ll bring over those nachos you think we’ll love. We all want to see what nature scenes you think are cool, Jose, and learn about the kind of music beetles make, Olive.”

And in five minutes, all of the friends showed up at the party, and they had a great party — the best party ever, in fact. Even though the laptops took a while to set up so that they projected on the floor and ceiling, and even though the food took some getting used to, and even though they laughed and laughed at the funny Beatles music. It was the best party ever. And from then on, whenever Rita planned a party, she built it around the gifts that each person brings to the table.

### **Questions for reflection:**

1. So what was the mistake that Rita made?
2. Why was it a mistake and what did she learn from it?
3. How is that like our congregation?

### **Option Three: “Theodore Parker and the Turtle”**

Adapted from versions of this story told by Dan Harper and Janeen Kelley Grohsmeyer

Once upon a time there lived a little boy named Theodore Parker. He lived on a farm in Lexington, Massachusetts. One fine day in spring, when Theodore Parker was nearly four years old, he was walking on the far edges of his family’s farm, swinging a stick as he walked. As he walked slowly past a small pond, not really heading anywhere in particular, he saw something marvelous.

There, on a rock on the edge of the pond, lay a little striped turtle, enjoying the sunshine and the fine summer day. Theodore crept closer and closer, with his stick lifted high in his hand. He had seen other boys hit animals: squirrels and lizards and birds. Theodore had always been too little or too slow to hit anything, but this turtle was too slow to get away. Theodore lifted the stick as high as he could and started to swing.

All at once something checked his arm and stopped him from striking the turtle, and a voice within him said, clear and loud, “It is wrong!”

Theodore held his stick in the air and wondered at this new feeling. “It is wrong!” the voice had said. It wasn’t his father’s voice. It wasn’t his mother’s. It wasn’t any of his 10 older brothers or sisters. It wasn’t the voice of a neighbor or even a friend. There was absolutely no one else around.

Theodore dropped the stick. The turtle crawled into the pool with a ker-splish and a ripple, and Theodore started to run. He ran all the way home and told the story to his mother.

“What was it that told me it was wrong?” he said.

His mother took him in her arms. “Some people call it conscience,” she said. “I like to call it the voice of God in the soul of people. If you listen and obey it, then it will speak clearer and clearer, like the tolling of a bell, no matter how old you are.”

“Even when I’m four?” Theodore asked.

His mother smiled. “Even when you’re four.”

“Even when I’m five?”

“Yes, even when you’re five or six, and even up to fifty and sixty and beyond. But if you turn a deaf ear, then it will fade out little by little, and leave you all in the dark and without a guide. Your life depends on your paying attention to this little voice.”

For the rest of his life, Theodore Parker listened to his conscience, that voice in his soul. As a grown-up, people called him a crusader, because his conscience told him that slavery was wrong and he should do what he could to abolish slavery and help free the slaves. Some people agreed with him about slavery being wrong, but some people didn’t. They argued with him and got angry with him, and some people even threatened to kill him.

But Theodore always did what he knew to be right, even when he was scared, because no matter how old he was, he always listened to that inner voice. He became a Unitarian Universalist minister, and today we remember him as a hero and an example of how important it is for all of us to listen to that inner voice, our conscience.

*These worship resources draw, in part, on “Ethical Eating: Food and Environmental Justice Worship Resource Supplement,” available at the following link:*

[http://uua.org/documents/washingtonoffice/ethicaleating/worship\\_guide.pdf](http://uua.org/documents/washingtonoffice/ethicaleating/worship_guide.pdf).