

THE ANIMALS CELEBRATE EASTER

by William C. Hassel



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**THE ANIMALS
CELEBRATE EASTER**

By William C. Hassel

PRODUCTION NOTES

This is a series of children's messages or sermons done in a play format for use during Lent or the six Sundays following Easter before Ascension Day. They may also be performed consecutively in a special Easter lesson for the children's Sunday school department, if desired.

They may be done in the area you use for your children's sermon. No special stage is needed.

These dialogs were originally written for a pastor and one helper; however, any teen or adult may take the pastor's part. You may use the same two persons each Sunday, or up to twelve people may be used to produce these messages for children.

The helper may dress up in costume to portray the various animal characters. The appearance of an adult-sized bunny or butterfly is a visual image guaranteed to hold the children's attention! Suggestions for the various animal costumes are outlined before each children's sermon. Other options for the helper include using puppets or large cardboard cutouts of the various animals, with the helper speaking as the character portrayed.

Feel free to adapt these witnesses of the Easter event as needed for your church. Hopefully they will be a useful tool for teaching children of all ages the "old, old story" once more.

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BEATRICE, A RABBIT'S STORY

(BEATRICE's rabbit costume can be a pair of cardboard bunny ears attached to a headband, a pair of white cardboard teeth attached to the upper lip with double-stick tape and white sweatpants and sweatshirt.)

PASTOR: Hello, children! Today we begin a new series for your messages. We're going to have fun and learn something, too. As a matter of fact, what I want to do is introduce you to some friends of mine who were living at the time of Jesus. They can tell you all about Easter from their point of view. Does that sound like fun? It sure does! Now let me tell you about an eyewitness of the first Easter day. You'll like her. She is Beatrice the bunny from the Garden of the Tomb. Help me call her up today. On the count of three, let's all say, "Beatrice, come here!" Ready? One... Two... Three... Beatrice, come here! *(BEATRICE hops forward wearing the rabbit costume.)*

BEATRICE: My, my, my... Why, hello, Pastor! Good morning, children!

PASTOR: Thank you for coming, Beatrice. I understand you were there at the tomb on that first Easter day. I'm wondering if you could tell us what it was like.

BEATRICE: Oh! Yes, I can. I remember it so well — like it just happened moments ago.

PASTOR: Tell us, what happened that first Easter morning?

BEATRICE: Well, as I remember it, I had gotten up early. As most of us rabbits do, I ventured out of my hole in the ground to nibble on some grass.

It was a pretty typical Sunday morning. It was nice and cool at sunrise. A little dew on the grass made it fresh again, especially after everyone had trampled all over the garden on Friday, when they brought Jesus to the tomb: first the soldiers, then the workers of Joseph of Arimathea, who brought the body of Jesus into the tomb

1 to bury him. Then the women came and saw where he
2 was buried, and the soldiers came back again.

3 This was now the second night and third day that the
4 soldiers were there guarding the tomb. I thought, "How
5 dumb." It isn't very often that you see someone guard a
6 tomb.

7 I remember thinking that this Jesus must've been
8 terribly important.

9 As I nibbled along, I came closer to the tomb. I noticed
10 that the guards were sleeping. Poor things, they had been
11 awake all night, and now at sunrise they just couldn't
12 help but sleep. And that's when it happened.

13 PASTOR: Happened? What happened?

14 BEATRICE: Why, the biggest and brightest light I had ever
15 seen or ever will. It came from the tomb of Jesus. First
16 the earth shook. The guards and I just shivered when it
17 first hit. With the very earth shaking, the stone in front of
18 that tomb shook, then it started to roll, and it rolled away
19 to completely open the tomb. Then a light came right out
20 of the tomb. And there in the center of this brilliant light
21 stood a man. It was *Jesus!* He was alive. I saw him!

22 PASTOR: Wow! What a day that must've been!

23 BEATRICE: I'll never forget the day Jesus rose from the tomb.

24 It really happened. You don't forget something like that.
25 Jesus rose. Jesus lives! Glorious Easter! That is what
26 Easter is all about. And you children need to know that
27 Easter is the day Jesus rose from the dead and lives
28 forever. Jesus makes it possible for you too! By believing
29 in him, you know there is life forever with God... I know
30 it's possible. I was there — I saw it myself.

31 PASTOR: Thanks for sharing that with us today.

32 BEATRICE: You're more than welcome. Good-bye, my friends.

33 PASTOR: 'Bye, Beatrice! And good-bye, children! I'll see you
34 next week with another animal visitor from the past.
35 Remember, God loves you, and I do too!

MALCOLM, A MOUSE'S STORY

(MALCOLM should be dressed in gray sweatpants and sweatshirt. Gray cardboard mouse ears may be attached to a headband. Whiskers may be added to MALCOLM's face with eyeliner. A tail, made from gray material, completes the mouse costume.)

PASTOR: Good morning! I'm so happy to see all of your smiling faces today. Do you remember Beatrice of last week? You do? Great! Today I'm going to introduce you to another friend of mine who was living back in the days of Jesus. He's a mouse. He says he won't come out until I promise that there are no cats around! So let's all make sure we don't see any cats. Do you see any? I don't either. OK! I think he'll come out now. Will you help me call him up? On the count of three, let's all say, "Malcolm!" Ready? One... Two... Three... Malcolm! *(MALCOLM comes forward wearing the mouse costume.)*

MALCOLM: Are there any cats out there?

PASTOR: No, Malcolm, I don't see any cats, and the children don't, either.

MALCOLM: Are you *sure*?

PASTOR: Malcolm!

MALCOLM: OK, OK.

PASTOR: Malcolm, can you tell these children what you saw in the Upper Room the week after Jesus rose from the dead?

MALCOLM: Sure can. Let me tell you, it was quite a night. There I was in my corner of the room, minding my own business, nibbling on some crumbs spilled on the floor that the maid didn't sweep up. It was cheese and a piece of cracker, if I remember right. Sure was good, too. Do you kids like cheese and crackers? I sure do!

PASTOR: Malcolm, would you please just tell the story? Who cares if you like cheese and crackers or ice cream or any

1 other food! What happened in the room that night?
 2 **MALCOLM:** Oh, that. Well, as I remember it, the disciples were
 3 there after the Crucifixion. They were as nervous as a
 4 group of long-tailed cats in a room full of rocking chairs.
 5 They all talked real quiet, as if a Roman soldier was going
 6 to knock the door down and arrest them all any minute.
 7 They had the door bolted, the windows closed, and the
 8 shutters pulled tight. Why, I don't think anyone could've
 9 found them if they wanted to. And then it happened!

10 **PASTOR:** Happened? What happened?

11 **MALCOLM:** Jesus came.

12 **PASTOR:** He just came?

13 **MALCOLM:** Yeah! He didn't come through the door, didn't slip
 14 through a window, didn't even squeeze through my
 15 mouse hole — he was just...*there!* And he looked at old
 16 doubting Thomas, and said, "OK, Thomas, look at me. See
 17 my hands and the nail wounds and feel my side. I am
 18 alive."

19 Well, old Thomas about had a heart attack right there.
 20 No one in the whole room doubted. Not even me. We all
 21 knew it was Jesus. We had seen him before, we had seen
 22 him crucified, and now we saw him again. And he was
 23 *alive!* Just as alive as you!

24 **PASTOR:** Wow! Really?

25 **MALCOLM:** Yep, really and truly! Jesus lives. I saw him. He
 26 showed us that he is God, and that by believing in him, we
 27 will live too! But that's nothing. You know the most
 28 important thing I heard that night?

29 **PASTOR:** No, what? Tell us, Malcolm.

30 **MALCOLM:** Jesus said, "Blessed are you who do not see and
 31 still believe!" (John 20:29, author's paraphrase) That is all of
 32 you. God blessed you when you believe, even though you
 33 didn't see Jesus crucified and resurrected.

34 God bless you and keep on believing.

35 **PASTOR:** Well, thank you, Malcolm. Thank you very much.

1 **And God bless you, too, for telling us your story. Thanks**
2 **for coming, children. I hope you come back next week,**
3 **because I have another friend for you to meet. Remember,**
4 **God loves you, and I do too!**
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FREDDIE, A FROG'S STORY

(FREDDIE should be dressed all in green with flippers on instead of shoes. He or she should squat down and get around by leaping, if possible.)

PASTOR: Good morning, children! How are you? We have a third visitor today — it's my friend Freddie. He's a frog. I tease him once in a while and call him a toad, but he doesn't like it! Would you like to meet Freddie the frog? You would? OK, here is what we have to do to get him to come out here. We all have to make a froggy sound. Can you do that? On the count of three we'll all say "rivvett!" One... Two... Three... Rivvett! *(FREDDIE leaps forward wearing the frog costume.)*

FREDDIE: Hi, Pastor! Hi, children! I'm glad to be here. And thank you, Pastor, for not telling all these fine children to say "croak." I am not a toad! I'm a frog. I live in a pond by the road to Emmaus. On rainy days, like the storm that hit on Good Friday, I sometimes go out to the road and find a nice cool puddle of water to hunt for flies.

PASTOR: Is that what you were doing the day you saw Jesus?

FREDDIE: Rivvett! I mean — you're right. That is exactly what I was doing.

PASTOR: Well, tell us, what did you see?

FREDDIE: I saw two men walking on the road. They were so busy talking that they didn't even pay attention to where they were going. Why, one of them even stepped in the puddle I was sitting in at the time. I had to jump out of the puddle before his big foot squashed me. Let me tell you, that got my attention! So I started listening to them talking about the death of Jesus, their friend — how he had been crucified on the cross and was now buried. They were really sad. I felt sorry for them.

PASTOR: Did you "croak"?

FREDDIE: No, I didn't croak, but I almost got stepped on

1 again. You see, suddenly out of nowhere came *another*
2 man.

3 **PASTOR:** What happened then?

4 **FREDDIE:** I watched the two of them walk off, talking and
5 talking. Those men didn't know it, but they were talking
6 with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. You see, I knew Jesus.
7 I had seen him on the road before — right before the big
8 Palm Sunday parade. They were talking with Jesus and
9 didn't even know it.

10 **PASTOR:** So you saw Jesus after his death? You're the third
11 one to tell me that.

12 **FREDDIE:** But that isn't the end of my story. I saw those men
13 later that night. They almost ran over me again!
14 Somehow they figured out it was Jesus they had been
15 talking to that day. Suddenly they were running back to
16 Jerusalem, shouting, "We've seen Jesus... We've seen
17 Jesus..." Why, they almost ran over me again. If it hadn't
18 been for my powerful legs, and the fact that I jumped
19 soon enough, they would've squashed me for sure.

20 **PASTOR:** Well, I'll be. The Bible tells how they came to
21 recognize it was Jesus as they ate dinner together. It was
22 in his breaking of the bread and saying the table prayer
23 that their eyes were opened. And they saw it was Jesus
24 that they'd been talking to all along.

25 **FREDDIE:** Is that how they knew it was Jesus? I always
26 wondered.

27 **PASTOR:** Yes, that's what happened next. Now these children
28 and all of the people here know it too. What a wonderful
29 story, Freddie. Thank you.

30 **FREDDIE:** You're more than welcome. Glad I could tell you all.
31 Thanks for having me. Well, I must go now — can't stay
32 out of the water too long, you know.

33 **PASTOR:** Yeah, or you'll croak. Ha, ha! Just teasing, Freddie.
34 Thanks again! Well, 'bye, Freddie. Good-bye, children.
35 Remember, God loves you, and I do too!

CRYSTAL, A BUTTERFLY'S STORY

(CRYSTAL should wear a black turtleneck and leggings or pants. Brightly colored cardboard butterfly wings should be attached to his or her arms so they may be moved to simulate flying.)

PASTOR: Good morning! How are you all today? Guess who is going to come and visit us. You'll never guess. Her name is Crystal. She is very, very shy. You'll like her. She is a butterfly — a spring butterfly who was in the garden of the tomb of Jesus. Let's see if we can get her to come to us. To get her here, we all have to make a sound like the wind. Like this: Whewwwww. OK! On the count of three, everyone blow. Ready? One... Two... Three... Whewwwww. *(CRYSTAL "flies" in, wearing the butterfly costume and flapping the wings.)*

CRYSTAL: Good morning, Pastor. Good morning, children. My, such a pretty day. And you children have such pretty colors on today. I am so thankful to be here.

PASTOR: Well, it's a joy to have you. Thanks for coming, Crystal. Now can you tell us what you saw on Easter morning?

CRYSTAL: Yes, certainly. I remember it so well. It was later in the morning on the first Easter day. I fluttered across the garden in all its lovely splendor. Then I heard someone crying. It was a lady. She was crying very hard. I felt so sorry for her. She looked like she had just lost a good friend.

And that's exactly what had happened. You see, I fluttered like this *(Flaps wings)* over to where she lay crumpled across a big stone, crying. I sat ever so softly on her shoulder. And she looked up. We both looked up. There stood a man...

The lady spoke to him between her sobs. "Sir, are you the gardener? I have come to the grave of my friend Jesus and his body is gone. Please, sir, please tell me where they

1 have taken him...please..."

2 **PASTOR:** Then what happened?

3 **CRYSTAL:** The man spoke. He just simply said, "Mary." That
4 was her name. She looked hard at him, and then said
5 "Jesus!" She was so happy that she jumped up to give him
6 a hug. He stopped her from touching him, but he let her
7 know that he was truly alive.

8 **PASTOR:** So you, too, saw Jesus alive after death.
9 Remarkable! Did anything else happen that morning?

10 **CRYSTAL:** Yes. He told Mary to go and tell their other friends
11 that she had seen him. She almost flew like a butterfly as
12 she left to tell the Good News to all the others. I can still
13 see her in my mind as she fluttered down the path toward
14 town. And I flew to my friends to tell them the Good News
15 of Jesus, too, just like I am telling you today. Jesus lives.
16 He lives, indeed! I never get tired of telling the "old, old
17 story!"

18 **PASTOR:** Thanks for your lovely story, Crystal.

19 **CRYSTAL:** You're welcome, Pastor, and you, too, children.
20 Thanks for listening. Now if you will help me, I need you
21 to blow again to give me wind so I can fly away. Would you
22 be so kind, Pastor?

23 **PASTOR:** Yes, we will all help you fly, won't we children? Help
24 me make the sound of the wind again. On three... One...
25 Two... Three... Whewwwww. (*CRYSTAL exits, flapping her*
26 *wings.*) 'Bye, Crystal. Well, we'd better go too. Remember,
27 God loves you, and I do too! 'Bye.

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DWAYNE, A DUCK'S STORY

(DWAYNE should wear a bright yellow top and pants. He or she should wear an orange cardboard beak, fastened around the mouth with string [Be sure DWAYNE's voice can still be heard intelligibly!] Yellow cardboard wings attached to the arms complete the duck costume.)

PASTOR: Good morning, children. Well, how are we doing today? I'm glad I have another chance to be with you. Today I have a new friend who will be flying in any minute now. His name is Dwayne — Dwayne the duck. Let's see if we can get him to land in here and visit. We need to call him by making a duck sound like this: Quack, quack. Can you do that with me? OK, on the count of three... One... Two... Three... Quack, quack! *(DWAYNE "flies" forward wearing the duck costume and flapping the wings.)*

DWAYNE: Look out! Here I come! Wow, rough flight. It was cloudy high above the church today. But I made it. And I'm glad to be here! Well, good morning, Pastor, how have you been? Good morning, children. How are you? Fine, I hope. Quack!

PASTOR: Welcome, Dwayne. Thanks for coming. I understand you have a story to tell about the first Easter morning.

DWAYNE: You bet your booties, kid! It was a funny weekend. There I was, flying along at low altitude, coming down to about three hundred feet, when the sky turned black, the lightning flashed and the earth shook. Why, it scared me so much I just put the flaps down and headed to the ground for cover. That's when it happened.

PASTOR: What happened?

DWAYNE: Why, the resurrection of Jesus. There I was on the ground. Suddenly, two men came running outta nowhere. One was slightly faster than the other. But they both made a beeline for the cemetery. They were running like

1 they were being chased. I just flopped along at low
2 altitude to see what I could see. I knew something was up.
3 And then they came to the tomb of Jesus.

4 **PASTOR:** And...and...

5 **DWAYNE:** And then they looked in. Actually, they went in. But
6 Jesus wasn't there. He was gone. Two angels in the tomb
7 told those men to quit looking there and go tell the Good
8 News that Jesus had risen. That's what I saw.

9 **PASTOR:** That has to be the most interesting event in the
10 history of the world. Do you realize that you are the fifth
11 one to come and tell us the same truth of Jesus rising
12 from the tomb?

13 **DWAYNE:** Well, Pastor, that's the way it was! I was there. Jesus
14 rose. He had said he would, and he did! No question about
15 it! Children, you need to know Christ is a living Lord. He
16 is risen and gives you the same hope. And he asks you to
17 tell others.

18 **PASTOR:** That is exactly what you have done, Dwayne. You
19 told us the story once again.

20 **DWAYNE:** I'll never quit telling it, either. Matter of fact, boys
21 and girls, I need to fly on now. I've got an appointment in
22 another church. So I better just quack on outta here. Hey,
23 have a good day, Pastor. Good-bye, children. Gotta go!

24 **PASTOR:** 'Bye, Dwayne. I guess we'd all better get going now.
25 Remember, God loves you, and I do too!

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CHARLIE, A CRICKET'S STORY

(*CHARLIE should be dressed in a black turtleneck and black leggings or pants. He or she should wear antennae made from black pipe cleaners fastened to a headband. He or she should crawl.*)

PASTOR: Good morning, dear children, good morning to you! Let me tell you, I have a very surprising visitor for you today. This one is really different. His story about the day of the Resurrection is really interesting. You'll never guess *who* my next visitor is, or *what* he is.

He is a cricket — a cricket who just happened to be right outside the tomb of Jesus on the first Easter Day. His name is Charlie the cricket. Do you want to meet him? You do? OK. Let's call him up. Everyone say "Chirp!" All together on three: One... Two... Three... Chirp! (*CHARLIE crawls forward wearing the cricket costume.*)

CHARLIE: Well, chirp, chirp yourselves! Good morning, Pastor. Good morning, children. (*To congregation*) And good morning to you old folks, too! Thank you for inviting me. I'm so glad to be here. Now, what can I do for you?

PASTOR: Charlie, can you tell these children what you saw on the first Easter?

CHARLIE: I sure can. I remember it so well. There I was, just minding my own business on a Sunday morning. I had been out all night, eating and chirping with my friends. It was getting to be daylight, so I was crawling my way back to my hole when it happened!

PASTOR: What happened?

CHARLIE: Well, I almost got stepped on. The greatest fear known to a cricket — the big foot of a human being. People, they have such big feet! And always stepping on us crickets! Why, I don't think they have any respect. Matter of fact, they show me no respect at all.

PASTOR: Yes, Charlie, I know. But we're not here to talk about



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