



THE HIGH PLAINS PREACHER

Welcome to the High Plains Preacher, stories about the Bible, high wind, fast horses, lack, of moisture and other elements of life in the Texas Panhandle

HARD-WIRED TO BE AFRAID

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

I train horses in my spare time. One of the hardest things about training a young horse, is getting the animal to overcome its fears. Horses, you see, are “hard-wired” to respond to fear. The least amount of unexpected movement, will cause a young horse to bolt.

The reason for this is the size and construction of the retina in their eyes. Their retinas are HUGE and they are huge for a reason. The size of their retinas enlarges and distorts the image of what the horses see, making the object appear twice the size it actually is and, if that object is in motion, making it appear to be moving twice as fast as it actually is.

For a horse, this means that a plastic bag blowing in ditch alongside a road is a blurry image, the size of a bobcat and moving extremely fast! Since horses have no claws or teeth to defend themselves, this defense mechanism gives advance warning to the horse to escape what might be a predator. Which is exactly what he does! Only when a young colt has run 20 to 30 feet away, will he typically turn around and take a good look at what startled him: “Oh, it’s just a plastic bag, not a bobcat!”

It is only at that distance that their eyes are able to focus clearly.

Horses are “hard-wired” to fear. And so are we. This is why the most frequent verse found in the Bible is not, “Love the Lord, your God” or “Love your neighbor as your yourself.” The most oft-repeated message in the pages of Scripture is “Do not be afraid.”

*“Though I walk in the valley of darkness, I will not fear,
for you are at me side with your rod and your staff to protect me.”*

“Mary, do not be afraid.”

“Joseph, do not be afraid.”

“You are my fortress, O Lord, My rock of safety. Of whom should I be afraid?”

“Do not be afraid...” Again and again the Word of God, urges us, pleads with us and encourages us with these words: “Do not be afraid.”

A young horse will eventually learn to trust its rider and bolt at the first sign of danger. And so must we. After all, our trainer is God. And God is Love. And Love overcomes all fear.