

# The Blessing of the Bicycles



**The Feast Day of Saint Caroline Chisholm**  
**Saturday May 16, 2015**  
**Red Wing, Minnesota**

## **The Blessing of the Bicycles** **By the Quicker Vicar, Matthew Cole**

### **Collect & Blessing**

**Vicar:** Remember Lord, that many of our bicycles have risen from the dead, much like yourself. Bless these our bikes, let not our hubs spew forth their gears, protect and shield our tyres from flats, let our cotter pins remain without blemish, save our thighs from unquenchable fire on the Maiden Rock Hill, and though we are not worthy, in thy mercy protect us from undue headwinds.

**Congregation:** Amen

### **The Reading** *(from Genesis, Chapters 2 and 3)*

*Men and Women please read responsively where indicated in **Bold**.*

**Vicar:** In the beginning God created the bicycle, saw that it was good, and on the Seventh day He went for a nice ride on the bike lanes He'd made the day before, and they were good, too, because they were new and He had the angels keep them clear of debris. And God said to Himself,

**Noel:** Let us create man, because cycling is too much fun to keep to Myself

**Vicar:** and so God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul, and began watching football on the telly and drinking beer. But God put man in paradise, and commanded him, saying,

**Noel:** Glideth upon the earth anywhere thou wisheth, except for that big hill over there. For on the day thou goeth down that hill, thou shalt surely die.

**Vicar:** And God said,

**Noel:** Man needs a companion to keep him from spending too much money on new bicycles.

**Vicar:** So God caused man to fall into a deep sleep by asking him if he wanted to go clothes shopping at the mall, then took a rib from him. Then God said to Himself,

**Noel:** Who am I kidding, I'll never hear the end of it when she finds out she was just a rib,

**Vicar:** so He created woman from frankincense and myrrh and a certain je ne sais quoi. And God said,

**Noel:** Let man have dominion over table saws and metric socket wrenches, and let woman have dominion over everything else, and as long as thou art naked and unashamed, thou might as well be fruitful and multiply.

**Vicar:** Lastly, God created the chicken and the egg, in that order, which should clear up that matter. Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which God had made, and the serpent said to woman,

**Men:** Yea, hath God said you may cycle anywhere but down that hill?

**Vicar:** And woman said unto the serpent,

**Women:** That's about the size of it: go downhill and die.

**Vicar:** And the serpent said,

**Men:** Ye shall surely not die, you probably won't even fall off. For God doth know that on the day you go downhill, you shall be as gods and will not need to pedal for a long time. Go on, give it a try.

**Vicar:** And the woman saw that the hill was good, she did not need to pedal for a long time. She told the man about it, and he also went downhill. The eyes of them both were opened and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves into padded cycling shorts because sometimes it got bumpy going downhill.

And they heard the voice of God in the cool of the day, as He was offroad, fully suspended of course, and they hid their bicycles at the bottom of the hill and started whistling nervously.

**Men:** *(whistle nervously)*

**Vicar:** And God called unto the man, and said,

**Noel:** Where art thou?

**Vicar:** And the man said,

**Men:** We art down here.

**Noel:** Hast thou cycled downhill, whereof I commanded thee that thou should-

est not cycle?

**Vicar:** And man said,

**Men:** It was her idea *(point to nearest woman)*

**Vicar:** And God said unto the woman,

**Noel:** What is this that thou hast done?

**Vicar:** And the woman said,

**Women:** The serpent beguiled me, and I did ride downhill.

**Vicar:** And God said unto the serpent,

**Noel:** Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel, and one day thou wilt be sunning thyself on the roadway and a bicycle shalt run thee over, to the surprise of all concerned.

**Vicar:** And God said unto the woman,

**Noel:** I will greatly multiply thy sorrow whilst climbing hills; in pain shalt thou perch upon thy saddle.

**Vicar:** And God said unto the man,

**Noel:** Because thou hast harkened unto the voice of thy wife, cursed is thy regular bike maintenance. The inner workings of thy hub gear will be beyond thou to repair. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou service thy free-wheel.

**Vicar:** And God said,

**Noel:** Behold, the man doesn't listen very well,

**Vicar:** so He kicked him out of paradise and guarded the entrance with a sign with a picture of a bicycle in the middle of a red circle with a line through it. And He had a Cherubim with a flaming sword stop by a few times a week for good measure.

Thus endeth the reading.

**All:** Amen

## The Hymn "I Sing a Song of the Chaps on Bikes"



I sing a song of the chaps on bikes; \_\_\_\_\_ pa - tient and brave and  
 They loved their three speed tour so well, and \_\_\_\_\_ this love \_\_\_\_\_ made them  
 They lived not on - ly in a - ges past, there are gen - tle - men cy - clists



true, who ate and drank and \_\_\_\_\_ rode real slow on the  
 strong. They stayed well right for \_\_\_\_\_ safe - ty's sake for the  
 still. The world is bright with the cy - cling chaps who \_\_\_\_\_



ride they \_\_\_\_\_ loved and knew. \_\_\_\_\_ One's name was Noel and an -  
 whole of the two days and long. And \_\_\_\_\_ one was a sai - lor and  
 love to ride Bri - tish steel. You can meet them in pubs, or in



oth - er was Jon, and \_\_\_\_\_ then there was Dave and \_\_\_\_\_  
 one was a priest and \_\_\_\_\_ one was \_\_\_\_\_ chased by a  
 lanes, or at sea, or in church, or in trains, or in



don't for - get Ron! They are all of them Gen - tle - men and I mean, chaps,  
 fierce, wild \_\_\_\_\_ beast! And there's not a - ny rea - son, no, not the least, why  
 shops, or at tea. For those chaps on \_\_\_\_\_ bikes are Nut - ters like me, and



help me to be one, too.  
 I should n't be one, too.  
 I mean to be one, too!

## The Psalm

*Adapted from King James Bible, 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm*

*Please read responsively*

**Vicar:** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

**Congregation:** He maketh me to lie down at lunchtime:  
 he leadeth me beside back waters.

**Vicar:** He restoreth my bike:

**Congregation:** he leadeth me in the bikepaths of righteousness for his  
 name's sake.

**Vicar:** Yea, though I ride through the valley of the Mississippi,  
 I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

**Congregation:** thy rod brakes and thy Dynohub™ they comfort me.

**Vicar:** Thou preparest a table before me in the Eagle's Nest Caf-  
 feeshop:  
 thou anointest my chain with oil;

**Congregation:** now my chaincase runneth over.

**Vicar:** Surely goodness and Sturmeys  
 shall follow me all the days of my life:

**Congregation:** and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

## Dismissal

**Vicar:** Make straight roads for our feet,

**Congregation:** so that the feeble may not be turned out of the way, but may be made strong.  
(*Hebrews 12:13*)

**Vicar:** In the name of the Trinity, High Gear, Direct Drive and Low, go forth and ride.

**All:** RAmen

† † †

Service adapted by Matthew Cole, the Quicker Vicar, 2015.

Reading adapted by Matthew Cole from "The Cyclist's Apocrypha"

*What Would Jesus Ride?*

## Notes on Today's Service

Three Speed Tourists who have attended my regular services (once a year) will recognize many elements of the Blessing liturgy. One has to scrape around a bit to find a saint for today; it is the Feast Day of Saint Caroline Chisholm. Chisholm was born in 1808 in England and emigrated with her soldier husband to Australia by way of India, they did get around in those days, where she engaged in many charitable works, primarily with destitute emigrant women. Much like North Dakota today, there were many more men than women in Australia and the British government encouraged girls ("Sheilas") to emigrate to redress this imbalance. Chisholm met these ships and made sure the girls were well-treated. She also encouraged settling in the bush and sponsored outings with horse-drawn drays where the participants would ride part of the time and walk part of it. Sounds like our Tour! She and her husband lived in London towards the end of their lives and Caroline died in poverty and obscurity in

1877. Her grave in the Billing Road Cemetery, Northampton, simply says "The emigrant's friend". There remain Caroline Chisholm schools, charities and streets throughout Australia. She is recognized as a saint in the Anglican church, for whom this is St. Caroline Chisholm day, and the Roman Catholics are thinking about it.

Anyway, the Reading and Psalm were adapted from the King James Version of the Bible (first issued 1611, most commonly cited edition is the 1769). This was an update of the first translations of the Bible into English using the new medium of print, a controversial political as well as religious act at the time, by William Tyndale. If you've been watching *Wolf Hall* on PBS, they mention Tyndale and his Bible quite a lot. The Roman Catholic authorities looked upon this with disfavor and had him strangled and then burned him at the stake, presumably just to make sure, on 6 October 1536. The reading is an adaptation of Genesis 2 and 3, in which man and woman are created, partake of the forbidden fruit, and are cast out of the Garden of Eden. God lectures the serpent a bit; the part about running over a snake whilst riding a bicycle refers my own personal experience riding from Ames to Des Moines one afternoon in the late 1970s. For the most part, the reading is adapted from **The Cyclist's Apocrypha** which appeared in Britain's **Cycling Plus** in January 2001 (see <http://www.bikereader.com/solo/apocrypha.html>) but it's a bit vague as to who the actual author is. The hymn "*I Sing a Song of the Chaps on Bikes*" is an adaptation of "*I Sing a Song of the Saints of God*" by Lesbia Scott, the wife of a Royal Navy officer who wrote the song for her own children. She published a book of her own hymns for children in 1929. This tune was written by a retired American Episcopal priest, made it into the American Armed Forces hymnal and the Episcopal 1940 hymnal and became a much beloved hymn although it is virtually unknown in the UK despite all the lanes and tea stuff. The final "RAmen" at the close of the service is our interdenominational nod to Pastafarians, those who believe in the Flying Spaghetti Monster and think they have been touched by His Noodly Appendage. The Vicar Matthew Cole was ordained by the Universal Life Church following a rigorous screening process consisting mostly of making sure he had a valid email account. In actual life, Matt's wife Karla is the Music Director at Saint Christopher's Episcopal Church in Roseville, Minnesota, where Matt sings in the choir most Sundays in season, early September to early June.