

## Close Encounter With A Cougar



Class dismissed. Have a good afternoon. Wayne Culling announced. Thirty middle school kids jumped out of their seats and rushed for the door. School was done for the day. Wayne breathed a sigh of relief. As a substitute teacher he liked the kids, just sometimes they wore him a little thin. He felt a need to relax and decided to go for a nature hike to revive his spirits.

He drove to his home near Crescent Beach on the Olympic Peninsula. His home was one of a few scattered in this remote area. When he arrived home, he pulled on his hiking boots and went down to the beach. He felt refreshed as he breathed in the fresh sea air and felt the ocean breeze.

He walked by large sea stacks of solid rock that rise like giant pillars out of the salt water. He heard the pounding surf and the incessant cry of seagulls. He stepped over many tidal pools careful not to lose his footing on the rocks covered with slippery seaweed. After walking the length of the beach he turned inland. He hiked up a trail that led into the foothills.

The terrain is rugged in the foothills. Tall evergreens with wild undergrowth carpet these hills. Foothills occupy the narrow strip of land between the sea and the mountains. Wayne was feeling better with the hiking exercise. He walked a long distance down the trail without seeing another hiker. Once in awhile he would look back and get a fantastic view of the Strait of Juan De Fuca.

As he walked along he just started feeling strange. He couldn't understand the cause of it. He tried to shake-off the feeling so he could enjoy his walk but it did not help. He walked until he heard a slight noise behind him. He turned around and saw a tawny brown blur through

the leaves of the undergrowth many yards away. Suddenly the cause of the strange feeling dawned on him an animal was following him. The blur was the color of deerskin but he knew it wasn't a deer. Deer don't follow people. He quickened his pace careful not to show any signs of panic. Although he hadn't seen it clearly, he knew that he was being stalked by a mountain lion.

In the wild you see cougars for one of two reasons, you have either surprised them or they are stalking you. Wayne stooped down and picked up a large broken branch. Holding a branch makes a person look bigger than they really are and sometimes that is enough to scare a cougar away. In all the years he had lived in this remote area he had never seen a mountain lion. Young mountain lions often have a hard time establishing their own territory in the mountains and sometimes come close to human populations looking for food. He decided to whistle to show the mountain lion that he wasn't afraid. He wanted it to know that he was not panicked. Predators such as mountain lions know that panic in an animal makes them easier prey.

Turning around he saw the mountain lion on the trail twenty-five yards behind him. Go away! Wayne yelled. Unfazed the cat walked steadily towards him. As a last resort he looked around for a tree to climb. He didn't remember whether climbing a tree was a way that was recommended to escape a mountain lion but he was going to climb it anyway. Several sturdy Douglas Firs were near by but the lowest limbs were far too high to grab. A few steps off the trail there was a smaller Hemlock tree maybe thirty feet tall. It would have to do.

He made a dash to the tree and pulled himself up the branches as fast as he could. He was mid-way up the tree when looking down he saw the whiskered face and the golden-green eyes of the mountain lion looking up at him. He saw the slim muscular body and the powerful limbs of the cat and realized it could easily climb the tree if it decided to attack him down. Wayne grabbed the branches above him and pulled himself higher. He climbed to the top of the tree hanging on for his life and at last began to breathe a little easier when the unexpected happened. The top of the tree began to bend over with him on it. With his arms and legs wrapped around the slender tree it wasn't strong enough to support his weight and began to bend over and didn't stop until he was upside down with his head pointed towards the earth. Wayne thought the end of his life had come. If he let go of his hold on the tree he would fall on top the lion. He was in the most helpless, defenseless position imaginable. As he hung upside down, one by one all the things in his pockets fell out, first his wallet fell, then his coins and then his keys. His keys made a clinking metallic sound as they hit a branch near the cougar's head. Something in the sound startled the cougar and he bounded off.

Wayne had climbed the tree to find safety, but the tree bent over so that he was upside down making him more helpless and vulnerable than before. We all have an adversary who would do us harm. Satan like a roaring lion goes through out the whole earth seeking whom he may devour. He is also called the Father of lies, and the prince of the power of the air. He hates everything that is true and good and that comes from God. If you have not come to the Lord Jesus to have your sins washed away in His most precious blood, this adversary will do everything in his power to keep you from doing so.

He does this in a variety of ways. One of his favorite ways to keep people from getting saved is by telling them lies. One lie he likes people to believe is that they are good, so the Savior did not need to die for them. The truth of the matter is that every member human race has sinned, All have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and each one is on their way to a lost eternity an eternity that will be spent in the miserable company of the devil and his angels. Not one person will ever enter into heaven with a blot of sin on them. Only the precious

blood of the Lord Jesus shed on the cross can wash those sins away. Have you believed on the Lord Jesus to have your sins forgiven?

Another tactic he uses is to get people believing that they can do good deeds to earn their way into heaven. He might convince them that all they need do is pray five times a day, give alms to the poor, recite a certain creed, or some such thing. The problem with this is we are told in the Bible that we can never enter into heaven by good works. Not by works of righteousness which we have done but through his mercy he saved us. He wants us to get saved first. Once we are saved the Bible instructs us that we should be zealous of good works. Gods way is for sinners to get saved by grace first, and afterwards do good works. Satans order is for men to try to do good works so that they might be saved. This keeps them from coming to the Savior by faith and keeps them helplessly in Satans power. Doing good works to get saved is like when Wayne climbed the tree to escape the mountain lion only to have the tree lean way over and leave him more helpless than ever before.

Are you one trying to earn Gods favor by good works? You will never successfully do it. God is too rich to sell salvation, and we are too poor to buy it. So, He gives it as a gift. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. You can receive this salvation through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. Once you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, your souls salvation will be out of reach of Satan forever. B.P.