

Questions:

1. What is the summary of this literary piece?
2. What lesson does the author want to convey?
3. What is the relationship of this story to the current time?

Answers:

1. Summary

"The Thief Who Became a Disciple" is a Zen parable retold by Paul Reps in his book "Zen Flesh, Zen Bones." The story tells of a notorious thief who sought out the famous Zen master, Banzan, to become his disciple.

At first, Banzan was hesitant to accept the thief as his student, but the thief persisted and eventually convinced Banzan to teach him. However, the thief continued to have difficulty letting go of his old ways and would sometimes steal from the local villagers.

Banzan tried various methods to teach the thief the error of his ways, including giving him a bamboo stick to carry around and hit himself with whenever he had the urge to steal. Despite these efforts, the thief continued to struggle with his thieving tendencies.

One day, the thief came to Banzan and confessed that he had stolen from the master's own house. Banzan replied calmly, "Thank you for telling me. I forgive you, but I must ask you to leave now. I cannot have a thief as my disciple."

The thief was devastated by Banzan's rejection but eventually realized the error of his ways and changed his life. He went on to become a respected and revered Zen master himself.

The parable teaches the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions and the power of forgiveness and redemption. It also emphasizes the transformative potential of spiritual practice, even for those with a troubled past.

2. Lesson

The parable of "The Thief Who Became a Disciple" by Paul Reps teaches us several valuable lessons. Firstly, it emphasizes the transformative power of spiritual practice and the potential for personal growth and change, even for those with a troubled past. The thief was able to overcome his thieving tendencies and become a respected Zen master himself through his commitment to his spiritual path.

Secondly, the story highlights the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions. When the thief confessed to stealing from Banzan's house, he demonstrated his willingness to own up to his mistakes and face the consequences of his actions.

Finally, the parable illustrates the importance of forgiveness and compassion. Banzan's forgiveness of the thief and his willingness to give him a second chance ultimately led to the thief's transformation and redemption. By offering forgiveness and compassion to others, we can help to create a more positive and compassionate world.

3. Relationship of this story to the current time

The parable of "The Thief Who Became a Disciple" by Paul Reps remains relevant in the present day because it speaks to the human capacity for personal transformation and growth, even in the face of challenging circumstances. The story encourages us to take responsibility for our actions, to seek forgiveness when we have caused harm to others, and to cultivate compassion and forgiveness towards others.

In today's world, where there is often division and conflict between different groups of people, the message of forgiveness and compassion is particularly important. The parable reminds us that through acts of kindness and understanding, we can build bridges between individuals and communities that have been divided by anger and misunderstanding.

Furthermore, in a time when people may feel discouraged or hopeless, the parable's message of the transformative power of spiritual practice can provide inspiration and motivation to those seeking personal growth and change. It offers a reminder that, with dedication and effort, we can overcome our past mistakes and transform ourselves into better versions of ourselves.

Overall, "The Thief Who Became a Disciple" remains a timeless parable with valuable lessons for people of all backgrounds and beliefs.

