

Story 1124 (1966 Tape 6)      Narrator: Bozkurt Güvenç, retired  
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Nasreddin Hoca as Preacher

Once Nasreddin Hoca was assigned to serve as preacher in a village. Taking over the duties of the former preacher, Nasreddin Hoca appeared at the mosque for the Friday noon *all* service.<sup>1</sup> But he had just moved to that village, and he had not had time to prepare a sermon. He addressed the congregation in the mosque: "O people, do you know what I shall talk to you about today?"

Hesitating for only a moment, the congregation answered, "No, we don't."

"Well, neither do I," said the Hoca, and he left the mosque.

On the next Friday, Nasreddin Hoca went to the mosque again and asked the same question: "O people, do you know what I am going to speak to you about today?"

"Yes, we do," was their reply.

"In that case," said the Hoca, "it will be unnecessary for me to repeat it." And again he left the mosque.

<sup>1</sup> Sunday is the legal Sabbath day in the Republic of Turkey today. But the traditional sabbath in Islam was Friday. Moslems in Turkey still think of Friday as the sabbath, and the high point of the religious week is the noon prayer service on

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On the third Friday, the people gathered ahead of time in order to decide what to say when the Hoca asked them his difficult question. They decided that half of them would say that they knew what he would talk about, and the other half would say that they did not know.

When Nasreddin Hoca arrived at the mosque, he asked the same question: "O good people, do you know what I am going to talk to you about today?"

Some said, "Yes, we

Others said, "No, we don't."

Upon hearing this, the Hoca replied, "If that is the way it is, then those who know should tell those who don't know."

On the following week, the people again gathered before the Friday noon service. One of them said, "This new man is so quick at repartée that no matter what we might say, he would find a reason for not giving us a sermon. Therefore, this week let us not give any answer at all to whatever question he may ask us." Everyone agreed with that suggestion.

Once again the Hoca mounted the mimber<sup>2</sup> and asked, "O Friday. Other services throughout the week may or may not have sermons, but the Friday noon service always does.

<sup>2</sup> The mimber or minber is similar to a pulpit. It is not at the front of the mosque but at a more central position. It is ascended to via a set of enclosed or boxed-in stairs. The hoca may ascend to the top or he may deliver his remarks from one of the steps.

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people, do you know what I shall talk to you about today?"

No one answered a single word. He asked the same question a second time and then a third time. Still no one uttered a sound.

"Ah!" said Nasreddin Hoca, "it seems that no one has come to the mosque today!" Saying only that, the Hoca again left the mosque without having delivered a sermon.