

The Legend of Petter Dass and the Devil's Ride to Copenhagen

The King of Denmark wanted to hear Petter preach in Copenhagen on Christmas Day. But the Bishop of Bergen disapproved of the request and delayed forwarding the letter—so long, in fact, that it didn't reach Alstahaug until Christmas Eve.

But Petter knew what to do.

He summoned the Devil himself and commanded him to carry him to Copenhagen. The price was steep: the Devil would claim the souls of all who fell asleep during Petter's sermon.

With Petter on his back, the Devil flew southward along the coast. But the journey was long, and the Devil grew weary. Hoping to shake Petter off, he flew lower and lower, so low that Petter's cloak brushed the wave-tops. The Devil hoped to provoke Petter into swearing—for if he did, he'd have to let go.

But Petter would not yield. He called out boldly:

"Higher up and farther on, you Satan!"

And so the Devil had no choice but to carry him all the way to Copenhagen.

Petter arrived just in time for the sermon. He had been promised that the text for his preaching would be ready upon his arrival. And sure enough, a paper lay waiting on the pulpit. But when he looked at it, it was blank.

"Here is nothing," said Petter, flipping the page.

"Here is nothing either."

A long silence followed.

Then, with a clear and powerful voice, Petter declared: **"And from nothing, God created the earth!"**

He then delivered a sermon so stirring that not a single soul in the church dared to doze off.

The Devil was cheated of his fare—he did not get a single soul that day.