

Sharleen Sardine

(If you find it too difficult to pronounce this name, call the fish Sara Sardine.)

(Note: Use a high-pitched voice for Sharleen.)

by Marilyn Alexander

Sharleen: [singing to the the tune of “Oh, Where, Oh, Where Has My Little Dog Gone?”] Oh, where, oh, where has my great big school gone? Oh, where, oh, where could it be? With its many fish—

Mrs. T.: [interrupting] Singing such a sad song, Sharleen Sardine? What’s the trouble?

Sharleen: Oh, I got separated from my school, and I’m worried that something will happen to me.

Mrs. T.: Miss Sardine, you’ll be fine here. This is a kids’ Bible club in a church. I’m glad you came here. We like to learn interesting things about God’s created things.

Sharleen: But I’m just a little fish.

Mrs. T.: Little fish are very important in our world, Sharleen Sardine. In fact, I read one author who said, “The humble [sardine] has done more than merely feed large numbers of ordinary people cheaply. It has advanced civilization more than any other fish.”

Sharleen: Someone said that about me?! Truly?!

Mrs. T.: Yes, truly.

Sharleen: I wonder what he meant by that.

Mrs. T.: For one thing, there are so many of you.

Sharleen: Oh, yes. That’s true, and we stay together in schools—thousands of us. Only I’ve lost my school.

Mrs. T.: Why do you stay in a school, anyway, Sharleen Sardine?

Sharleen: Because The Lord God made us that way, for one reason. Maybe it’s to keep us safe from our enemies. It’s like the old saying, “There’s safety in numbers.”

Mrs. T.: Yet, a lot of you get caught. You sardines feed many, many people.

Sharleen: And because there are so many of us, we can do it cheaply, huh, Mrs. T. I wonder how I’ve advanced civilization, though. What is civilization anyway?

Mrs. T.: Civilization is people of nations making progress in learning and life. Let’s think about that. If you feed lots of people, that keeps civilization going.

Sharleen: And I know people used me in trade.

Mrs. T.: That would advance civilization.

Sharleen: I know that I am one of the three main fish in the Sea of Galilee. In fact, Herod, who was king when Jesus lived, started a sardine industry on the Sea of Galilee.

Mrs. T.: He did? How did that happen?

Sharleen: Well, in those days people couldn't eat *fresh* fish unless they bought fish directly from a fisherman or caught fish themselves. People didn't have refrigerators or freezers then, you know. If someone lived inland, he couldn't have someone take him fish by camel. That would take several days.

Mrs. T.: Ooooo! Can you imagine how bad a fish would stink after only a day in that hot country!

Sharleen: You're right, Mrs. T. So the people developed a kind of pickling sauce to preserve us sardines. In fact, Magdala, Mary Magdalene's hometown on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee, became a kind of factory town nicknamed the "Town of Salt-Fish."

Mrs. T.: A real fishing-preserving industry, huh?

Sharleen: Yep. Galilean pickled fish went all over the Roman Empire. People everywhere loved to eat sardines.

Mrs. T.: Wow! That advanced civilization!

Sharleen: Why, now that you mention it, I guess it did. Did you know that some people think I was the kind of fish that the boy had when he shared his lunch with Jesus and the crowd?

Mrs. T.: No, but just think—he made just two of you plus five small biscuits into enough to feed a crowd of 5000 men. If we count the women and children, I'd guess Christ fed as many people as live here in [Lamar, population of about 9000].

Sharleen: Well, that wasn't too hard a job for the Jesus the Creator, who put so many of us in the Sea of Galilee and in seas all over the world, now, would it?

Mrs. T.: You're absolutely right. Jesus Christ, who is God, can do anything!

Sharleen: I still wish I could find my school. You're nice to talk to, Mrs. T., but I like it much better being with my fellow fish.

Mrs. T.: *Fellow fish? Fellow fish?* Those words sound like one word that we who are born again like to use when we go to church and talk about God's Word—*fellowship*.

Sharleen: Oh, like fellows in a ship?

Mrs. T.: Well, sort of.

Sharleen: Tell me about it.

Mrs. T.: You see, just as fishermen might be in one boat, people who believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour should be in a church.

Sharleen: Why?

Mrs. T.: Because, just as your school is God's idea for you sardines to stay together, the church is His idea for Christians to stay together and learn what His Word, the Bible, says we should do.

Sharleen: My school works together, too, so that we can be protected from our enemies. Do you have enemies?

Mrs. T.: Christians have a powerful enemy named Satan. If we learn and use the Word of God and encourage each other, we can be protected too.

Sharleen: I wonder how many of the kids at Bible club today get to go to church. If you don't, kids, why don't you ask your parents if you can come here to [Calvary Baptist Church]?

Mrs. T.: We all meet at 10:00 on Sunday morning for church. The little kids (ages 2 to second grade or so) go to their own children's church around 10:25.

Sharleen: What do they do there, Mrs. T.?

Mrs. T.: They have their own Bible story. [Mrs. A.] is teaching them [from the book of Genesis] right now.

Sharleen: Is that the first book in the Bible?

Mrs. T.: Yes, and they sing and do handwork, and sometimes have games to help them remember the Bible story.

Sharleen: I wish I could come, but I *rather* wish that I could find my—. Hey, do you see that great big group of pretty silvery fish? Yoo-hoo! Yoo-hoo! That's my school! I've gotta go!! [singing] Oh, yippee, I've found my great big school!—

Mrs. T.: [calling to Sharleen] So long, Sharleen! Kids, I hope we will all want to be in God's church on Sunday as much as you want to be in your school!

Sources:

"Sardine," *World Book Encyclopedia*, 1980, Vol. 17, p. 110.

<http://www.sardimpex.com/articoli/In%20Praise%20of%20the%20Pilchard.htm>

<http://zbh.com/sermons/godbrea2.htm>

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