

Bible and the Headlines: Crying Horse

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In a few weeks, the world's second most populous country will celebrate the start of a new year. On February 17th, the Year of the Fire Horse will start in China and be celebrated around the globe by ethnic Chinese people. According to Chinese superstition, the year of the horse is an unlucky time to be born. In the headlines is the story of an anonymous toy maker who accidentally birthed a mascot for the Year of the Fire Horse that has become a sensation. Talk about luck.

On January 12th, China Daily published, "Factory Flaw' Spurs Toy Horse to Instant Popularity." What began as a worker's mistake (the toy horse's mouth was sewn on upside down) became a social media sensation. The article notes, "Netizens quickly dubbed it the 'cry-cry horse', and demand for the 'accidental edition' flooded in." Within a week the hashtag #YiwuCryCry-HorseGoneViral had been viewed by over 100 million people on a Chinese internet browser.

MSN on January 26 carried the Reuter's piece, "Accidental 'Crying Horse' Toy Wins Hearts in China." The figurine is described as a, ". . . red plush horse with a downturned mouth, a gold bell around its neck, and eyes that appear to shy away from a viewer's gaze." Prior to this particular manufacturing faux pas, there already was a trend in China for 'ugly-cute' toys inspired by previous internet sensations.

Among the Chinese diaspora in the south Pacific, the news portal Business Today Malaysia featured on January 26, "The Accidental Toy Taking Over China's Lunar New Year." Mainland China's largest vendor of this toy horse told reporters she, ". . . initially offered refunds, but the toy spread online instead, with users joking that the crying horse captures how people look at work, while the smiling version reflects life after hours." The popularity of this icon of overworked employees has added to the stress of toy shop workers who struggle to keep the shelves stocked with the crying red horse.

The Bible contains a king who would have purchased this red horse if it had been available three millennia ago. King Solomon was no office minion but God spoke through this ruler to say, "Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the face the heart is made better" (Ecc 7:3). Jesus explained this counterintuitive missive in the Sermon on the Mount. He told His disciples, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who are sad, for they will be comforted" (Matt 5:3-4).

The promise of Divine comfort is better than trusting to luck, and something China's little crying pony can never give.