

The Story of Baucis and Philemon

Philemon, an elderly man, and Baucis, his wife of many years, lived together in a small cottage in Phrygia. They led a tough but happy life, and they were always kind to one another and to others, too. As they sat one afternoon in their humble home, they could never have guessed what amazing thing was about to happen to them.

That very morning, Jupiter had sat on his throne on Mt. Olympus feeling bored. He decided to visit the earth and have an adventure. He chose Mercury, the messenger of the gods, to accompany him. The two disguised themselves as humans and then set off for the earth. On this day, they planned to visit the land of Phrygia and find out how welcoming the people were. Jupiter cared a great deal about hospitality. After all, anyone who was a guest away from home would pray to him for protection.

When Jupiter and Mercury arrived on earth, they began knocking on doors and begging for food and shelter. The residents of the homes, whether mansions or huts, all responded in the same way. Each time, the door was slammed in the gods' faces. The people had no clue that they were turning away two of the gods! After trying hundreds of houses, the two gods felt extremely disappointed.

Finally, they came to a tiny cottage. As they knocked on the worn door, Jupiter and Mercury prepared themselves for more disappointment. To their surprise, however, the residents opened the door wide! Baucis and Philemon cheerfully ushered the two strangers into their home and introduced themselves. They didn't have much, they said, but they would do their best to make their guests feel welcome. The couple served the strangers food and wine, and then a very strange thing happened. Baucis and Philemon noticed that the wine bowl remained full even though many cups had been poured. Their guests must be gods! Philemon then decided that he should catch and kill his pet goose in order to offer it to these gods. However, the old man was no match for the fast young goose and was unable to catch it.



Jupiter laughed and decided the couple had done enough. He led them outside and up a mountain. As Baucis and Philemon looked back, they saw that the entire countryside had been covered in water. All of their neighbors had been punished for turning away the gods! The only building that remained was their own cottage, which was now transformed into a beautiful temple. Jupiter then offered the couple a wish. Baucis and Philemon decided that they would like to serve as priests in the temple. They also wanted to be allowed to die at the same time since they had lived together for so long. Neither of them wanted to live alone. The gods were happy with this wish and returned to Mt. Olympus.

Baucis and Philemon served in the temple for a long time. One day, they both died at the same time, and leaves and bark began growing around them. The two became trees, an oak and a linden tree which shared a single trunk. People came from far and wide to see this miraculous tribute to such a pious couple.

