

The Summoning of



Abridged by
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from the modern English text in
The Fordham University Medieval Sourcebook



Everyman was written in the late 1400's. The source for it has not been established. A Flemish work entitled *Elckerlijc*, with the same story and theme, was written about 1495 by Peter van Diest.

Cast of Characters

Messenger

Death

Friendship

Cousin

Good Deeds

Confession

Discretion

Beauty

Doctor

God

Everyman

Kindred

Worldly Goods

Knowledge

Strength

Five Senses

Angel

Setting: *The heavenly realm and here upon the Earth.*

Messenger: Listen to this moral play about the summoning of Everyman. It shows how, at the end of our lives, we are shown to be transitory. You think sin in the beginning full sweet, which in the end causes the soul to weep when the body lies in clay. You will see how Friendship, Kin, Worldly Goods and Possessions, Strength and Beauty will fade from you like a flower fades in May. You will see how our heavenly King calls Everyman to a general reckoning. Listen to what he says:

God: Everyman lives only for their own pleasure, and yet their own life is not assured. They forget completely the shedding of my son's red blood. The more patient I am, the worse they are from year to year. Therefore I will have a reckoning of Everyman's person. If I leave the people alone, they will become worse than beasts. They devour one another with jealousy, forget to be charitable to their fellow man, and become preoccupied with material possessions. Therefore I must do justice on Everyman. Death, my Mighty Messenger, where are you?

Death: I am here, ready to do your bidding.

God: Go to Everyman and tell him as my representative that he must take a journey that he cannot escape from, and he'd better bring a reckoning without delay.

Death: Ah, I see Everyman walking over there; meeting me is the last thing on his mind, for he is preoccupied with his own self and possessions. He will dread standing before the Lord, heaven's King. Everyman, stand still, where are you going so cheerfully? Have you forgotten your Maker?

Everyman: Who wants to know?

Death: I have been sent to you from heaven by God.

Everyman: What does God want from me?

Death: He demands a reckoning from you right away.

Everyman: Oh Death, you've come when I least expected you. Save me - I'll give you whatever you want if you'll be kind to me - a thousand dollars if you'll leave me alone and come back another day.

Death: Everyman, that is not possible. I don't stop for gold, riches, pope nor emperor. Many have offered me gifts, but that is not my way. Come on, be quick.

Everyman: What? Not even a warning? To even think of you makes my heart sick. I'm not ready to give a reckoning! Come back in a few years and I might be more prepared. Please spare me until I'm better prepared.

Death: It's no use to cry, weep or pray. But see if any of your friends might accompany you. For death waits for no man. All living creatures must die for Adam's sin.

Everyman: Oh God in heaven, have mercy on me! Shall I have no company to join me on this journey?

Death: See if any are daring enough to accompany you on this journey.

Everyman: I have no one to help me on my journey! I wish I'd never been born! I fear great pain, and I don't know what to do! Who might come with me? Maybe Friendship; we've been close for years. Surely he'll help me. I'll speak to him right away.

Friendship: Hello, Everyman, why do you look so sad? If something is wrong, please tell me so that I can help you.

Everyman: Yes, dear Friendship, yes, I am in real trouble!

Friendship: My true friend, tell me what's wrong; I will never forsake you. Through thick and through thin, you can count on me.

Everyman: Then you truly are a friend indeed; you have never disappointed me before.

Friendship: And I never will; I swear, even if you were to go to hell, I would stay with you.

Everyman: I have been commanded to go on a journey - a long, hard, dangerous journey to give a reckoning before

God, the high judge. Please come with me as you promised.

Friendship: That's tough luck. But if I were to accompany you, it would be painful for me, and the very thought scares me.

Everyman: Indeed, Death was with me here just now.

Friendship: If Death was the messenger, then I will not go with you. I would not go on that journey even for my own father!

Everyman: But, my friend, you promised!.

Friendship: Not even our friendship can persuade me to go.

Everyman: You won't come, Friendship? You're forsaking me?

Friendship: Yes, I'm sorry, but I leave you in God's hands.

Everyman: Where else can I turn for help if even Friendship fails me? I know - I'll go to my family. My

kinsmen will help me, because blood is thicker than water.
Kindred, are you there?

Kindred: In riches or poverty, you can always depend on your family.

Everyman: God has called me to give account for my life, how I've lived and spent my days, and my ill deeds. Please come and help me give account.

Kindred: What! But you're so young and merry! Take heart! But, no, I won't go with you.

Everyman: My Cousin, will you go with me?

Cousin: No, I have a cramp in my toe.

Everyman: Tell me the truth - will you go with me, or stay behind?

Kindred: Stay behind? You'd better believe it! Farewell, I'll see you later.

Everyman: All my life I have loved riches; maybe now they'll help me. My goods and possessions have made my

heart light before, I'll speak to them in this distress. Where are you, my goods and riches?

Worldly Goods: Here sir; if you have any trouble or adversity in the world, I can help.

Everyman: It is something else that grieves me; I am sent to give an account before the highest judge of all. All my life you've given me pleasure, therefore, come with me and speak to God for me. They say that money can make all wrongs right.

Worldly Goods: No, Everyman, I sing another song, I follow no man in such voyages. If I did go with you, it would go worse for you because you set your hope on me. I have made you forget that this day of reckoning would come. Your love for me will be your undoing.

Everyman: Yes, I have loved you, and had great pleasure in the good things your treasures have provided for me.

Worldly Goods: That is to your damnation, because love of money goes against eternal love. If you had loved me more moderately and shared some of me with the poor, you would not be in this trouble and sorrow.

Everyman: Curse you, false hope! You deceived me, you traitor, and caught me in your trap! Oh, who shall go with me on my journey? Friendship, although he promised to be true, left me alone. Kindred, although he spoke pleasantly, also refused to go with me. Then I went to the possessions that meant the most to me, and they said that my love for them may send me to hell! It's my own fault, I alone am to blame. Who might help me now? I can ask Good Deeds, but she is so weak that she hasn't the strength to speak much less accompany me. Nevertheless, I have nothing to lose by asking. Good Deeds, where are you? Please say you'll go with me or else I'm forever damned. Help me to make a reckoning before the redeemer and king.

Good Deeds: Everyman, I am sorry for your fall, and I would help you if I were stronger and more able.

Everyman: Good Deeds, at least give me some advice.

Good Deeds: I'll be happy to, although I'm so weak I'm not able to get on my feet; I have a sister named Knowledge who will go with you in your dreadful reckoning.

Knowledge: Everyman, I will go with you, and be your guide. In your need, I'll stay by your side. We'll go together to the cleansing river of Confession.

Everyman: Oh, glorious river that cleans all filth, wash me so that no sin is seen on me. I come with Knowledge for my redemption, I repent with hearty and full contrition. I am commanded to make a journey and give account to God. Oh, please, Mother of Salvation, I beg of you to help my Good Deeds.

Confession: I know your sorrow well, Everyman; since you have come to me with Knowledge, I will comfort you as best I can. I will give you a precious jewel called Penance; it shall punish your body and cancel out your adversity.

Everyman: Oh, God, heavenly Figure, good and right Vision, Who descended in a pure virgin to redeem Everyman who was forfeited by Adam's disobedience - Oh, blessed God, forgive my great offense and have mercy on me!

Knowledge: Everyman, I leave you in the hands of our Savior to ensure your reckoning.

Good Deeds: I thank God, now I can turn and go; I am delivered from my sickness and sorrow and now I am able to go with Everyman and help him declare his good deeds.

Everyman: Welcome, my Good Deeds; now I hear your voice and I weep for the very sweetness of your love.

Knowledge: Don't be sad anymore, but be glad. God has seen your confession from his throne. Put on this garment which is wet with your tears of repentance so that He might remember your tears when you come to your journey's end. Now you must lead three more mighty persons on your journey.

Everyman: Who are they?

Good Deeds: Discretion, Strength and Beauty.

Knowledge: Also, you must call your Five Senses as your counsellors.

Good Deeds: You must have them always ready at all hours

Everyman: My friends, come here and be with me - Discretion, Strength, my Five Senses and Beauty.

Strength: We will all bring him there, to help and comfort, believe me.

Discretion: So we will go with him all together.

Strength: And I, Strength, will by you stand in distress, and help you in any fight.

Five Senses: Through thick and through thin, we will not depart from you in good times or bad.

Beauty: Even to death, I will stay with you, whatever may happen.

Knowledge: Everyman, listen to me; Go to Priesthood, I advise you, he will give you the holy sacrament and ointment. Then return here to us. We will wait for you here.

Five Senses: Yes, Everyman, there is no emperor, king, duke, nor baron, that is greater in importance than the least priest, for he bears the keys and therefore has the cure for man's redemption. God gave that cure out of his own heart with great pain. In this earthly life there are seven sacraments - baptism, confirmation, priesthood, communion, marriage, the holy extreme unction, and penance; these are gracious sacraments of high divinity.

Everyman: I will receive holy communion.

Five Senses: Everyman, that is the best that you can do; God will bring you to salvation, for Priesthood exceeds all other things; he teaches us the Holy Scriptures.

Knowledge: When priests are good then it is true; when Jesus hung on the cross with great pain, he gave, out of his blessed heart, that same sacrament in great torment. But that sacrament is not for sale and those priests who take money for giving the sacraments have God's curse on them for being such a sinful example.

Everyman: Now may Jesus help me. I have received the sacrament for my redemption, blessed be you who gave me the suggestion! And now, friends, let us go on without further delay. I thank you for waiting for me so patiently. Oh, dear, my legs are so tired I can barely stand! I'm sorry, but I can't go a step further, I must creep into this cave and rest.

Beauty: But, alas! This is a grave!

Everyman: Yes, there you shall consume more and less.

Beauty: What, would you have me smother here? I'm out of here, goodbye, I'm taking my things and leaving.

Strength: Everyman, this is no longer any fun, I'm leaving as well.

Everyman: He that trusts in his Strength will find that it deceives him in the end. Both Strength and Beauty have forsaken me, although they promised me so faithfully.

Discretion: Everyman, I will also be leaving you alone now that Strength has gone.

Everyman: Why, Discretion, why must you abandon me, too?

Discretion: When Strength goes, I follow him.

Everyman: Everything fails except God alone; Beauty, Strength, and Discretion; for when Death blows his blast, they all run from me as fast as they can.

Five Senses: Everyman, I must be going, too; I am following the others. Here's where I leave you.

Everyman: Oh Jesus, help, all have forsaken me!

Good Deeds: Not all, Everyman, I will stay with you. I will never abandon you. You will find me a good friend when you need one.

Everyman: Thank you, Good Deeds; now I see who my real friends are; the rest have forsaken me, every one, although I loved them better than my Good Deeds. Knowledge, will you forsake me too?

Knowledge: Yes, Everyman, I will leave when you go to death; but not until I see what happens to you.

Everyman: I think it's time for me to go, to make my reckoning and pay my debts, I see my time is up. Heed my example, everyone, note that those I loved best left me, every one except my Good Deeds who stayed 'til the end.

Good Deeds: Don't be afraid, I will speak for you.

Everyman: Here I plead, Oh, God, have mercy! Into your hands I commend my soul. Receive it, Lord, that it may not be lost. As you bought me, so defend me and save me from the fiend so that I may appear with the angels and be saved on the day of doom.

Knowledge: Now he has suffered so that we all shall endure; Good Deeds shall make everything certain. Now he has ended, I think I hear angels singing and making great joy and melody where Everyman's soul shall be received.

Angel: Come, beloved of Jesus: Hereabove you shall go.

Doctor: You who hear, this is the moral: let go of your pride! Beauty, Five Senses, Strength, and Discretion; they all abandoned Everyman in the end...everyone except his Good Deeds. But beware, if your Good Deeds are small before God, you will have no help at all. No excuse will be found there for Everyman, and what shall he do then? For after death, no man may make amends, for then even Pity will forsake him if his reckoning is not clear when he comes. So ends the moral play of Everyman. Look well and take good heed. This matter is wonderfully precious, but the intent of it is more gracious.