

"THE CARPENTER'S PRESENT!"

by Mark Pittman
(aka PaPa)

The Dedication

How often do you think of Jesus as a real Person? He truly is the Mediator between God and man, fully divine and fully human. He came to earth in a manger, dwelt among us, died on a cross, rose from the tomb and lives inviting the world to receive and enjoy Him each day! My religious construct has created for me an image of a perfect Person but has often lacked the comfort that accompanies His Personal perfection! He was a Carpenter, a Shaper of raw materials into something that came to life as personal and practical. This imaginative look at this Carpenter is written to help us be reminded that He is working in us to will and do of His good pleasure. Allowing little children to come to Him must have been a frequent occurrence as he interacted in His home and His workplace.

This story is dedicated to my friends, family members and especially my Grand-babies! My prayer is that this story will impress each reader with the truth of Christ's Personal touch for us, in us and through us! The point of His grace is that we can be both saved and solved by it! His favor on us compels Him to fashion so many wonderful things for us. You are His favorite and those skillful hands are fashioning each of us for Himself. May we learn to relax in the skillful hands of this gifted Carpenter! The story continues...

The Delivery

Together the trio ran playfully giggling and laughing with every step. You see, today was the day they went to visit the Carpenter. He was kind, gentle and always welcoming to these three energetic children. He had promised them that He would create for each of them a special present. They had been to His shop on many occasions and were always mesmerized as they watched His skillful hands fashion His latest masterpiece. It seemed as though whatever He was making at that moment was the greatest creation yet. Sometimes the wood would not cooperate, yet He would carefully work through the knots and grains to shape a beautiful and practical piece of art. This excitable bunch would always run to the portion of His shop where the toys would be found. You see His toys were so lifelike. It was as if His animal creations could come to life if He just said the word!

Today was the day when little Lee's animal was being finished. They were so excited because this was the day that the Carpenter had said that they could take their individual toy home. Makayla was so eager to give her fluffy lamb its first hug. Bryce was planning out the adventures of conquest he would have with his majestic horse. Lee was looking forward to roaring through the market with his stately lion.

Not only was this the day they would take their toy home, but this was also the day that they would enjoy something even better. You see, this gentle Carpenter was not only a gifted

craftsman, but He was also a colorful storyteller. His stories of adventure were not like any stories they had ever heard. When He would speak, their heart would almost skip a beat. The tales He told were deep with meaning and personal care.

As their custom was when they arrived, they bolted to the toy area of His shop. He was waiting for them and had three little stools positioned and ready. Each stool was custom made for them so they could easily sit in them. The seats almost looked like little stair steps crafted for the comfort of each excited guest. After they were seated He announced that He had finished their gifts. They giggled with a joyfulness that they had never known before.

MAKAYLA

He first presented Makayla with her fluffy sheep. She was known for her deep emotions. She was passionate about what she believed and it always showed. When He gave His gift to her, she was surprised and thrilled that it was smaller than she expected, it was a baby lamb. She loved babies and, being the oldest child, she had much experience helping her mom with her little siblings. Tenderly He began telling the story of the lamb. "Dear little friends," He said with a voice so tender yet firm, "this little lamb represents the lamb we sacrifice at Passover." They all knew the importance of the lamb since yearly their family had the Passover meal which reminded them of God's great Egyptian deliverance of so many years ago.

At first Makayla was sad, even to the point of tears, as she contemplated the death of little lambs. The Carpenter noticed her tears and gently wiped them from her rosy cheeks with the edge of His robe and went on to explain, that the day was coming when no more little lambs would need to be sacrificed. Soon the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world would be sacrifice once and for all. Little lambs would live free and grow to fully mature adult sheep and not be sacrificed because God's Lamb, the Messiah would lay down His life for all Israel and for every individual in every country throughout the world.

Each person in the world could look to the Lamb and trust in the Sacrifice for their eternal ransom and redemption. As He completed His story of Her lamb, Makayla jumped from her stool and gave Him a big hug of gratitude and joy. She said, "I will cherish my little lamb as I look forward to God's Lamb dying for my benefit!" He responded assuringly, "You will see and you will believe, dear Makayla!" He returned her hug and helped her back to her seat.

BRYCE

Now was Bryce's turn! Bryce was known for his bright eyes, and his eyes had never been brighter as He saw the Carpenter reach for his gift. From behind a block of wood on His table, the Carpenter brought forth a little colt.

Bryce loved horses and the thought of having a horse that was small like him, just thrilled his heart. He knew that just as he would grow up; so little colts grew to become stately animals that were ridden by kings and soldiers.

He longed to be a rider on a horse one day. When the Carpenter handed Bryce his colt, Bryce stroked the colt's mane and back, and hugged the Carpenter with thankfulness. The Carpenter

told them of the day when the Messiah that had given His life as a Lamb would return as a resurrected King with a heavenly army in the clouds. He told them this imperial Rider would speak and His foes would be defeated by the words that came from His mouth. Bryce blurted out that he would be ready to be a rider in that host! "I will follow that King anywhere," he exclaimed with confidence and determination. The Carpenter just smiled and said, "I know dear Bryce, I know!"

LEE

Last but not least was Lee. He was the youngest but he was a strong little bundle of energy. The volume of his laughter was contagious as he grinned ear to ear looking all around to see if he could catch a glimpse of the Carpenter's gift to him. The wait was over, for the rugged yet gentle hand of the Carpenter opened to reveal a little lion cub.

How did the Carpenter know that He loved the cubs? The Craftsman told the story of the Messiah and how He was the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Not only the long awaited Leader of Israel, but also the King of Kings and Lord of Lords of all the earth. As the cub would mature to become the King of the beasts, so the baby Messiah, born in a manger, though humble, would be exalted through death and resurrection to the ultimate height of honor.

You see, every knee would bow and every tongue would confess to His majesty and holiness. Lee was thankful and leaped from his stool and ran into the strong arms of His gifted Friend. "I want to always honor, serve and follow that King," Lee declared! The Carpenter smiled and assured him saying, "You will, little Lee, you will!"

All the gifts had been fashioned, given and explained. The Carpenter drew them all close and as they enjoyed the firm yet tender embrace in this group hug, He prayed over them for the Father to bless them all with His richest blessings of love, relationship and freedom! After this meaningful prayer was ended they tearfully thanked their Friend for this wonderful day. The excited trio gathered their treasures and said goodbye to their dear Friend. As they walked home they agreed to never forget these presents, these stories and this gentle, loving, strong and trustworthy Carpenter that would always be remembered as their faithful and present Friend. Not only did He give them their presents on that day, but He also gives us His presence every day! May we never forget that the greatest present, is that He is present, in our present!

Sincerely,

PaPa

PS - JOSEPH

As time went by, the close knit family of David, Marie, Makayla, Bryce & Lee welcomed a new addition to their family, baby Joseph. What a cheerful little bundle of joy he was to his parents and siblings. One day as they were traveling through the streets of Nazareth, the children became very giddy, because their family was nearing the home and shop of their dear Friend, the Carpenter! They excitedly entered the shop and called for Him and He appeared from the back room with the same radiant and kind countenance that they had seen so often. Today they could

show off their little brother and introduce mom and dad to their comforting Friend. As the conversation began the kids noticed a small carving in His hand. The Carpenter spoke while opening His Hand, "I have been looking forward to seeing you again dear friends! Look at what I have been working on, just for this special day of reunion!"

As His hand opened a small delicate carving of a sparrow was revealed. Makayla blurted out, "That little bird is so cute!" Just then Bryce and Lee moved closer and both reached for the carving that the Carpenter had put on a little stool in front of them. When the two curious and energetic boys lunged for the bird, they hit the stool at the same time and the delicately crafted sparrow fell to the ground. To their shock and horror, one of its wings broke off and the pieces lay separated on the floor.

Marie was so sad about the event and encouraged the kids to calm down. Just then the Carpenter reached down and took the two pieces in His hand and carefully placed the two pieces back together and for some reason, that no one to this day can explain, the two pieces became one again and also the colors of the sparrow were enhanced with a special vividness. They were reminded of a truth that they had been taught all their lives, that our Father can bring vibrant beauty, even from brokenness!

The Carpenter extended the gift to David and said, "This little sparrow has been a project of Mine for sometime now. I would like to give this to you for baby Joseph as a reminder that no sparrow falls to the ground without the notice of our Father. Also, the gift should remind us all that we are of more value than many sparrows. Our Father is ever cheering us on, as we learn to fly in the arena of His creation."

Joseph is a special name for Me. Joseph was a steady, comforting and compassionate Father figure for Me throughout my upbringing. He was gracious to my mom, Mary, during a time of great mystery and uncertainty for our little family. I pray that you and Marie will continue to firmly and tenderly lead and guide your little "flock," so that soon, you will see them soar in flight, throughout their very individual journeys. Thank you for coming to the shop today. May this day and every day be filled with the richest blessings of our Father's presence!"

That precious family, having met and interacted with the Carpenter, left the shop that day changed forever! You see, meeting the Carpenter, truly changes all our lives forever!