

dec 20

today we share a sweet story of how children only wanted to bring the Christ Child a gift. on their way to Him, they encountered others that needed the gifts they had for Him. maybe the moral of the story is that all He requires of us is our presence. if we will do that, He will reward us with an even greater gift. enjoy.

His Gift To Us

by Sylvia Probst Young

Hannah, Joel and David lived with their grandfather many years ago on the desert plains near Bethlehem. There was much excitement on this particular evening as Grandfather, who was a shepherd, had just come in from tending his flocks.

He told the children that the prophesy had just been fulfilled. Last night as they were sitting by the sheep fold, the sky was suddenly filled with such brilliance that all the shepherds were afraid. Then out of the blinding brightness came an angel of God, and he told of the heavenly choir that sang as the angel told them of the birth of the Christ child. Then Grandfather told them that all the shepherds went quickly to the manger to see, and there they found the baby sleeping on the hay, beside the ox and the donkey, while his gentle mother and Joseph watched by his side. And Grandfather told of the wondrous feeling of peace and joy that filled their hearts as they looked at the

promised Messiah.

Then Grandfather told them that tomorrow, they could go and take what gifts they had to Him.

The children talked excitedly of the coming morning and what they might take for the new born King. Then Hannah's eyes lit up "I'll take the shawl, the white knitted one that mother made, I knew I should save it for something special."

Their mother had died when Hannah was 10 years old and now she was thirteen and had to take care of the home and Joel and David, her two younger brothers, and their grandfather.

Joel decided that his gift was to be a lamb. His very own white one that he loved dearly. And David who was only six wondered what he could bring. Hannah and Joel looked at each other and then at Grandfather, for you see, David had a twisted leg and had to walk with a crutch. He could see the question in the eyes of the others and quickly he said: "I can go, can't I? I can keep up with Hannah and Joel, it won't be too far." So it was all planned that David could go too, and Hannah said he could take a barley loaf for the baby's mother and Joseph.

The next morning bright and early, Joel got up and went to the sheep fold to bring his lamb...and on the way back to the house, he stopped at his friend Peter's house. Peter had seen him from his window and motioned for him to come in. Peter petted the lamb. You see, Peter was crippled and had to stay in bed and couldn't play

as other children. Joel felt sorry for him and said he could have the lamb. The look on Peter's face was like a sunbeam had touched it and it made Joel feel so wonderful inside. But on the way to his house he wondered what Hannah would say because now he didn't have a gift for the Christ child.

But Hannah thought he had done the right thing, and was sure the Christ child would be proud of him. "Anyway," she said, "we still have the beautiful shawl and barley loaf."

Excitedly they left the house and started to walk to Bethlehem. They had to walk slowly so that David wouldn't become too tired, and as they walked they talked about the wonderful things Grandfather had told them and wished they could have heard the angel and the heavenly choir.

As they got near Bethlehem, a palm tree by the side of the road looked like a good place to stop and rest. Hannah had packed a little goat skin bag with cool water and honey cakes, and it tasted so good. They were just thinking of going on when a traveler came along the road walking with the help of a gnarled old cane. He looked so tired that Hannah asked if they could be a help to him. The old man asked if they had a little water they could give him. As he drank the water, he asked them where they were going, and they excitedly told him the story Grandfather had told them and finished with: "We are going to see the Christ child and the manger." The old man listened intently and wished he could go with them, but he was on his way to Jerusalem to live with a relative. So Hannah and

Joel decided they should give him the barley cake and the rest of the water. The old man couldn't believe that he had heard them right and tears came to his eyes as he gratefully accepted the barley loaf and jug of water.

As the children started again on their way, they had a warm, good feeling inside. None of them said anything, but they each knew inside that they had done the right thing. At least they still had the shawl.

As they walked down the narrow streets of Bethlehem, they stopped at the home of their aunt Sarah. They had decided before they left home that they would do this and perhaps she would go with them to the manger. But when they knocked on the door, a lady came to the door and told them that Sarah was very, very sick ... but they heard a feeble voice call out to them so they went inside. And as Hannah put her arms around the elderly lady, she could tell the old woman was cold. Tears gleamed in her eyes as she told her aunt she hoped that she would be able to go with them to the stable to see the Christ child...and once again they told Grandfather's story of the angels visit to the shepherds. And as the old lady listened a faint gleam came into her dim eyes and she told them to be sure and come back and tell her all about the visit.

Quickly Hannah laid the precious shawl over her aunt's cold shoulders and she looked like a queen. Then without saying a word they left the house...each realizing that now they didn't have any gifts for the Christ child.

Hannah's voice quivered when she finally said: "I'm sorry, but she was so cold. I had to put the shawl on her, she is our aunt." Then David asked if they were still going to see the baby, and it was Joel that said: "Of course we will go, I think the Christ child will understand why we haven't any gifts for him."

Hannah smiled and agreed that Joel was right.

By following their grandfather's instructions it was easy to find the stable behind the inn. They were met at the stable by a tall, gentle looking man. He smiled at them and asked if they had come to see the baby. Hannah explained that they were the grandchildren of the shepherd Mathias who had come with the others the night before and he had told them that they might come today. So Joseph led them to the back of the stable where a beautiful young woman sat near a manger.

As she saw the children she smiled and took the baby Jesus from his little bed in the hay, and held him down for the children to see. He looked so dear and tiny all wrapped in his swaddling clothes.

Then Hannah spoke almost in a whisper, "He is so beautiful." Then a sudden shadow crossed her face, remembering. "We had gifts for Him and for you," she looked at the mother almost apologetically, "but along the way there were people who needed our gifts, so we gave them away, and now we have nothing to give."

The mother looked at her lovingly. "Child," she said, putting her hand on Hannah's shoulder, "you and your brothers have brought the greatest gift of all—your own

kind hearts. The Lord knows and accepts your offering.”

All too soon it was time to go. The baby was carefully placed in his manger bed and good-byes were said.

As the children started back on the road toward home, their hearts were warm and full of joy at the wonder of the day. They had so much to tell and so much to remember for the rest of their lives.

As they walked along pondering, Hannah’s eyes became glued on David. “Your crutch, David, where is your crutch?” David was startled “My crutch, I didn’t bring it, I forgot it in the stable. Hannah, Joel, look—I don’t need my crutch, I don’t need it at all. I won’t ever need it again.”

He was walking without even a sign of a limp, his twisted leg was straight, he was walking unaided, then running, running wild and free as an unshackled cold.

“The Christ child did it for me,” he said simply. “He made my leg straight.”

“Yes, David,” Hannah answered humbly, “it is His gift to us – his wonderful, wonderful gift.”

may we all learn to treasure our time in His presence. our commitment, our life is our gift to Him. if we can do that, He will reward us with a gift beyond our

greatest dreams or expectations. may His peace fill
you all this season.

linda