

The JC Team

Sr. Mary Joe CSN

Volume 3



HE IS 'THE ONE'

The JC Team

Bible Stories told like never before!

Volume 3

THE JC TEAM

Copyright © 2024 by Sr.Mary Joe CSN

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form of by any electronic or mechanical means without permission in writing from the publisher

Front Cover Design by: Benjamin Joseph

CHAPTER 1	Dave's Dilemma
CHAPTER 2	Martha and Mary
CHAPTER 3	Taking the Step
CHAPTER 4	Jesus' Family
CHAPTER 5	The Centurion's Boy
CHAPTER 6	The Curse?
CHAPTER 7	Peter's Secret Wish
CHAPTER 8	Jairus' Daughter

Chapter 1

DAVE'S DILEMMA

“Talía, you are so blessed to have a son like Dave. He is such a fine gentleman!” a lady stated to Talía as they walked down the lane, one fine afternoon.

“It is all the grace of God. Dave left early this morning to meet the pearl merchant. He has plans to begin a new trade. His work keeps him too busy,” Talía said.

“Find him a fine bride and he will slow down,” smiled the lady as she took leave and turned to the path that led to her home. Talía walked on towards her house, a little further away.

As Talía entered, she noticed Dave was already home.

“You are back soon!” Talía exclaimed.

“I was able to fix a fair deal with the pearl merchant. He will pay the price we put for the pearls. Mother, we will make a huge profit from this trade,” he beamed.

Talía smiled. “God is with us. I was just talking to the ladies, and all of them were telling me how lucky I

am to have a son like you. I felt so proud,” said Talia as she sat beside him.

Dave smiled at his mother. “I’ve met the priests and made an offering at the Temple. I assured them of my help for the synagogue repair work.”

“I’m sure they must have been very happy and blessed you,” Talia said.

Dave nodded and managed a faint smile, but there seemed to be something deep inside that was disturbing him. “Despite all this, why do I still feel empty inside, mother? Why do I still feel that something is lacking in me?” Dave sighed.

Talia looked kindly at her son and held his cheek. “You lack nothing, son. There is no need for you to feel that way. You are a good person. And you have everything,” she assured.

But somehow, that feeling just wouldn’t shake off him.

A few days later, as Jesus was preaching to a crowd by the lake of Galilee, Dave came that way. He had heard of Jesus and was happy to learn that it was Jesus who was preaching. Dave settled down to listen. Jesus was teaching about the Ten Commandments.

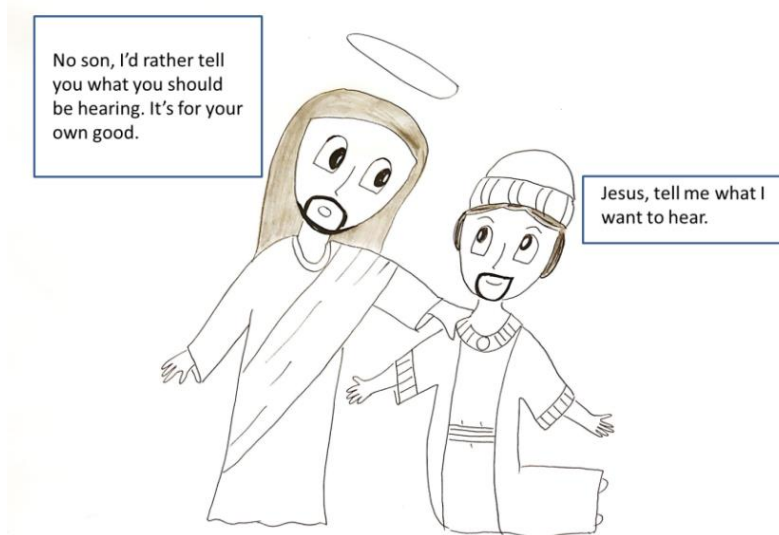
“These Ten Commandments can be made into one commandment-Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength and love your neighbor as you love yourself. If you observe carefully, you’ll get to see that the first three commandments speak of the love in our relationship with God and the rest seven instruct us on the love in our relationship with other people. It is all summed up in ‘Love’. It is the measure of love that you have in your hearts that will take you to eternal life in Heaven. Nothing else can get you there.”

After the sermon, as the crowds were leaving, Dave came and knelt before Jesus.

He asked, “Good master, what should I do to earn eternal life?”

Jesus looked at him and could see that Dave was a good man. Jesus saw the earnestness in his eyes and could sense the confusion in his heart. Jesus knew the disturbing questions that were going through Dave’s mind, and Jesus had the answers to them. But would Dave be willing to accept what Jesus had to say?

Jesus spoke, “Why do you call me good? No one is ‘good’ but God. People may call a person ‘good’ if he seems perfect on the outside, but God alone sees the inside, which is often ‘not so good.’ If you wish to earn eternal life, keep the commandments.



Dave asked him. “Which ones?”

Jesus thought it a silly question and was going to reply, “All ten, of course!” but he could see that it was pride in Dave’s heart that had made him ask this question because Dave believed, and many others spoke of him too as a ‘gentleman’. Dave was sure that he kept all the Ten Commandments, and Jesus knew that whichever commandment Jesus would now state, Dave would claim he faithfully followed it. However, Jesus could see that Dave hadn’t realized that he was living a life dented in the very first commandment.

Jesus understood that what Dave wanted to hear was an assurance, “You are good...good enough to get to eternal life already!” Though it was something that

Dave had heard about himself often from many people, it didn't quite satisfy him. But if he heard it from a great prophet and 'man of God' like Jesus, it would pacify his soul. Jesus decided to go soft on him, and so evading the first three commandments, Jesus put forward the last seven...

"You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor you father and mother; You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Dave responded confidently, "I have faithfully kept all these from my young days. What do I still lack?"

Jesus looked straight into Dave's eyes and said those words that Dave would forever remember with a heavy heart, "If you want to be 'perfect' go sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor and you will have treasure in Heaven. Then, come and follow me."

At these words, Dave's mouth fell open. He had never imagined something of this sort was coming!

Jesus went on, "I see the unrest in your heart. It is because God speaks to your heart of a higher calling. He has chosen you to be His instrument in proclaiming that it is not in attaining riches of the world one finds fulfillment, but in earning riches of Heaven. I know it

is a hard decision- but if you are willing to take this step, God will give you the grace, and the unrest in your heart will find peace in the decision you make.”

Jesus looked on at Dave for a response. Glancing away from Jesus and staring at the ground, Dave was still and silent for a while. He couldn’t imagine himself as a poor man. He couldn’t imagine himself away from the security of his home. People who respected and envied him would treat him with derision once he became poor. Dave couldn’t imagine all that! Although the power of Jesus’ call was tugging at his heart, the sacrifice that was demanded of him seemed too much.

Dave shook his head and looked at Jesus. His eyes were moist, and his voice was shaking, “I can’t...I can’t come with you.”

Jesus said, “You have the freedom to choose. All I can promise you is if you choose to come with me, you will be part of a great adventure, and will definitely attain the eternal life you seek. If you choose to remain in your home, you will miss out on many enriching experiences in life God has reserved for you. You can’t have the best of both worlds, Dave. So far, you have experienced the riches and glory of the mortal world. God, who made you to be born into a noble family, has given it to you. Now God calls you to forgo it and invites you to a higher calling that will

lead you to the riches and glory of eternal life. God now wants to give you the best that is offered there, but for that, you will have to forgo the best you have here. I place the choice before you. Decide now. Is it mortal life or eternal life that you prize more?"

"Will I lose eternal life if I stay at home?" Dave asked.

"You will attain eternal life as long as you keep all the Ten Commandments. As of now, you are a charitable man, and willing to share your riches with the needy. But as you grow in the riches of this world, there is every possibility you will become greedy and break the first commandment 'I am the Lord your God. You shall not have other Gods before me.' Your wealth will become God for you...and I can see it already has taken God's place in your heart."

Dave spoke, "I know this call of God should be an honor to me, but I feel it like a burden. It is a call I cannot follow. Please forgive me."

Saying this, Dave turned and walked away in tears. Jesus' gaze followed him for a while. Then he said to his disciples, "It's hard to give up on the riches and comforts of this world once you have tasted and enjoyed it. But with the grace of God, and the strong will of your heart, it is possible! One has to be bold to take the first step and then God will help him through.

It's so hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God through the Narrow way if he has too much baggage. It would be easier for a camel to get through the eye of a needle!"

Zeke nudged Dan, "Can you imagine that? A camel through the eye of a needle?"

Zorah shook her head. "It's not easy to even get the thread through the needle's eye at times....can't even think of a camel!"

Zeka spoke, "Jesus is talking about the Needle Gate, the narrow gates used for entering the city when the main gates close at night."

Zorah understood. "Oh yes, I have seen how the men who come through that gate unload their camels, bend and push them through the Needle Gate. It is quite a task."

"Does that mean that the entry will be tough for the rich, and easy for the poor?" Zeke asked.

Jesus said, "Heaven is open to all men with a heart. It is what one does with his riches that matters. If he spends them feasting and drinking while many around him are hungry and cold, he sins. If he is willing to share and care for those who need food, clothing, and shelter, God sees the heart and will open wide the Gates of Heaven for him."

“Yeah, for he comes to Heaven with less baggage when he gives away in charity. He can get through the Narrow Way to Heaven!” Zeke reflected.

Peter spoke, “Jesus, we never had many riches to give up for you. But the little that we had, our homes, our families, our jobs-we’ve left all these for you.”

“Yes, you have, Peter,” Jesus agreed. “God sees. He has blessed you from the moment you made the sacrifice and took the decision. The places we go, the people we meet...God has now and will again give you many more fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters....a hundred times more than what you have given up for him. When you love, you will be loved. This love will qualify you to behold the beauty of eternal life in Heaven.”

“The Gates of Heaven will open for me?” Peter asked with a smile.

Jesus smiled back, “Much more for you Peter- you might just be the one who will open it for the others too.”

Chapter 2

MARTHA AND MARY

“Mary, Jesus has come,” informed her sister Martha. Mary hurried to the door where Jesus and his disciples stood. Martha poured out water from a jar to wash Jesus’ and his disciples’ feet. Finally, she came to a pair of tiny feet. She looked up to see a beaming seven-year-old Dan.

“He is one of us,” smiled James.

“Yes, John is no longer the youngest disciple,” joked Peter.

“Jesus now has a gang of naughty kid disciples hanging around him,” smiled John.

Martha washed Dan’s feet and kissed him welcome.

Martha and Mary led them into the living room, where they all were seated. People from the neighborhood had also come to see Jesus and hear him speak. Jesus spoke about the Kingdom of Heaven. The people were attentive to his words. Martha tried to be attentive, but felt distracted. She was concerned about the arrangements. “When will the sermon end? Should I set the table now? What if the dishes get cold? I wonder if Jesus will like the dishes I made. What if he doesn’t? What if he gets upset with something? What

if something goes wrong? I don't know what, but something could just go wrong no matter how well I plan things out." These pestering thoughts kept disturbing her and she couldn't listen in peace to what Jesus was saying.

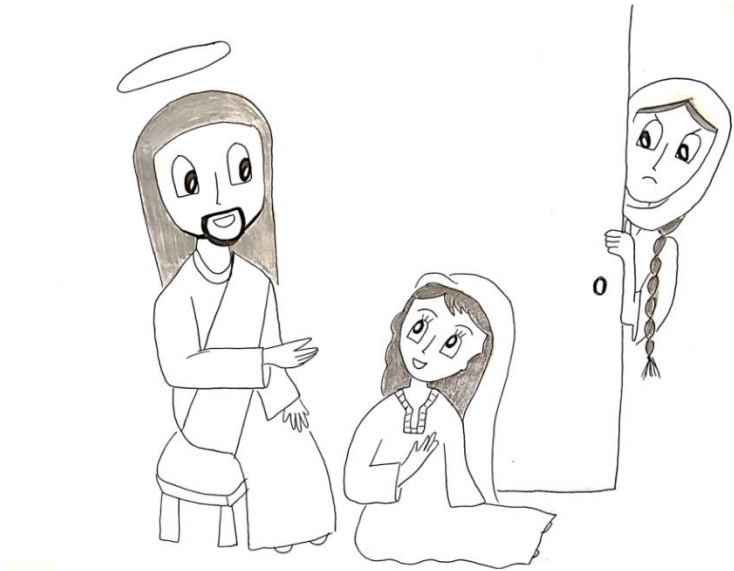
Martha looked at her sister Mary, who was sitting near her, soaking in each word Jesus was saying. Martha nudged her. Mary turned to her sister. Martha spoke in a low voice, "Mary, shouldn't we be setting the table? Let's go make sure the food is still warm."

"We'll do all that after he finishes preaching," Mary whispered back.

But Martha just couldn't sit still. She excused herself and went to the kitchen, hurrying about to make sure everything was fine. Minutes passed by. Jesus was still speaking and Mary was still gazing at him.

"Shouldn't she be helping me here?" Martha felt offended. "Why does she leave me with all the work?"

Every now and then, Martha would come near the door of the living room and glance at Mary, hoping she would turn to look at her so Martha could beckon her to the kitchen. But Mary's eyes were fixed on Jesus and her ears were attentive to his words. Martha became agitated.



Even though he was preaching to the crowd in the living room, Jesus noticed Martha and sensed the inner turmoil she was going through. He felt sorry for her. At one point, when Martha came near the door to peek in at Mary, Jesus paused his sermon and told the crowd, “Would you now ponder over the words I have said for a while till I’m back?” Jesus rose and followed Martha.

Jesus asked her, “Martha is there something worrying you? Can I help you?”

Martha was surprised that Jesus had actually followed her. It also embarrassed her to tell him the matter of her concern, but the earnestness in his eyes prompted her to open up to him.

Martha spoke, “Lord, please ask my sister Mary to come and help me. There is much work to do in the kitchen.”

Jesus smiled and said, “I thought I was invited here to preach to you all?”

“Yes, Jesus. We believe you speak the Word of God. I am blessed to have you in my home today, and I desire to make you happy and fulfilled!” Martha innocently answered.

“How do you intend to make me ‘happy and fulfilled?’” he asked.

“By making your stay comfortable and offering a hearty meal,” she replied.

Her love moved Jesus. He held her hand, gazed into her eyes, and said, “Martha, I understand that it is the love in your heart for me that motivates you to do all this for me. I appreciate that. But I want you to know that what would make me happier than these delicious dishes would be your presence with me. Do you want to love me ‘the way you want’ or do you want to love me ‘the way I want’? Mary has chosen to sit at my feet, and that will not be taken away from her as long as she desires to stay there. There is a place for you there too... would you?” Martha’s eyes welled with tears. She kissed Jesus’ hands.

“Lord, I want to love you the way ‘you want me to love you’,” she said.

“Then come....” holding her hand, Jesus led her back into the living room. He seated her by his side, near Mary. Mary was glad that Martha had returned. She looked at Martha and smiled. Martha smiled back.

Jesus continued with his sermon. “Once, there was a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. One fine day, as they were all grazing, the shepherd noted that one adventurous little sheep had gotten distracted and strayed away. Now he could have said ‘Why bother? I have the other ninety-nine with me. Why waste time searching for ‘one’ lost sheep? Once the breeding season comes, I will be able to make up for the lost sheep because I’ll have many new sheep then.’

But this shepherd didn’t say that. He loved his flock. Each sheep was unique and special to him, dear to his heart, and irreplaceable. So he set out in search of the lost one. He searched high and low, far and wide, till he found it. And when he did, he rejoiced, and holding it close to his heart, brought it back to where the others were. And they all rejoiced with him.”

Jesus said this and looked lovingly at Martha who smiled and wiped a tear trickling down from the side of her eye.

Chapter 3

TAKING THE STEP

“Hold on tight!” yelled out Peter over the roaring waves as he and John struggled at the oars to control the boat that was tossing over the huge waves. Little Dan clutched on tight to James. James could feel Dan shiver all over.

Patting him gently, James whispered to him, “It’s alright child. Don’t worry. God will protect us.”

The wind was blowing hard, and the lightning streaks across the night sky were fierce. The thunder blasted loudly, and the waves roared in response.

Dan clasped his hands together and prayed, “Lord God, please calm the sea. Please help us. Please save us. Calm the sea God, please....”

Gradually, the waves subsided, and the sky cleared, revealing twinkling stars.

“That was close!” John muttered under his breath, exasperated as he pushed aside the oar and stood up to stretch his back.

“What is that?” Andrew pointed out to a figure in the distance. It looked like a man. He was walking on water and coming towards their boat!

“It’s a ghost, and it’s coming this way!” John exclaimed and picked up the oar again in panic.

“No, wait....” Peter peered closer.

The man lowered the covering around his head. It was Jesus. “Don’t be afraid. It is me,” he said and continued to walk on the waves toward the boat.

John gasped in disbelief. All the disciples were wonder-struck. Jesus was walking on water without sinking!

Peter spoke, “Jesus, if it is really you, order me to come out on the water to you.”

Jesus smiled and beckoned, “Come.”

Peter stood up. His eyes were firmly fixed on Jesus. Without hesitation, he took his first step from the boat into the water.

“Peter, what are you doing?” asked Andrew, his brother, who was afraid Peter might drown.

But Peter wasn’t afraid. His foot could feel the flow of the cold water beneath. He lifted his other leg and placed it outside the boat.

The disciples stared in surprise. Now Peter was standing on water!

With his eyes still on Jesus, Peter walked towards him, slow and steady, over the waters. The cold wind blew at him, ruffling his clothes. The cool waters moved gently across his feet. After a few strides however, the waves began to rise. The sea began to show signs of unrest again, and the boat began to rock. Peter sensed the change and it distracted him. Tearing his gaze away from Jesus, he looked around at the night sea and it seemed scary. He looked down at his feet and saw his feet were not grounded. Peter gulped! Fear took hold of him and the next instant, he went down with a splash into the water.

Raising his arms for help Peter cried out, “Help! Save me!”

Jesus rushed to him and firmly held his arm.

By then, John brought the boat closer, and the others pulled Peter back into the boat. Peter was shivering all over with the cold and fright.

Jesus got into the boat too. He sat beside Peter and looked into his eyes, “Why did you doubt, Peter?”

Peter sighed. He felt embarrassed. “I thought I could do it,” Peter replied.

“You did do it,” Jesus said. “But why did you doubt?”

“The waves scared me,” Peter admitted.

Jesus shook his head. “No, it was because your gaze left me.”

Peter looked once again into Jesus’ eyes, and he could feel power flow from his gaze. Power that had given him the guts to get out of the boat and stand on water. Power that was lost when he had turned away.



“The world around you might scare you. If you let it get to you, you will fall. When I give you the order to do something, I give you the power too. But you have to trust me and stay focused.”

Peter understood and nodded.

Chapter 4

JESUS' FAMILY

“Blessed is the woman who bore you in her womb and nursed you! She must be proud to have a son like you!” said a woman from the crowd as the power of Jesus’ sermon moved her heart in awe and wonder at God’s love.

Jesus gazed at the woman and smiled. He looked around at the people who had crammed into the synagogue to listen to his words and witness the miracles he did.

Jesus responded, “Blessed are those who do the will of God! My mother is blessed because she perfectly obeys the will of God always and everywhere. It is the sweet offering of her life to the will of God that makes Heaven pour down grace upon grace over her.”

One disciple of Jesus squeezed his way in through the crowd and informed Jesus, “Your mother and brothers have come to see you.”

Jesus turned to the crowd and asked, “Who is my mother? Who are my brothers? Those who have done the will of God are my mother and my brothers. My mission is to fulfill the will of God for my life, and whoever shares the same desire in their hearts—to

fulfill God's will—becomes a family united in the same mission.



Mary, my mother, surrendered herself to the will of God, even when it put her life at risk. She is my mother! Here, these disciples of mine have left their homes and families to fulfill the will of God. They are my brothers! Anyone who does the same will be a part of our family, with my mother and my brothers!”

Chapter 5

THE CENTURION'S BOY

“Daniel, my kite got caught on that tree!” whined little Vincent.

Daniel was helping little Valeria plant saplings in her garden.

“Vincent! Valeria! Come have your milk!” called out their mother from the house. “Daniel, bring in the kids. You’ve been working out in the sun all day!”

“We are coming,” Daniel replied and directed the kids to go to the house. “My kite!” reminded Vincent.

“I’ll get it for you by the time you get back,” promised Daniel.

“You’ll help me finish with the saplings too?” Valeria queried.

“I will. Now you two hurry along and have your milk.”

The children washed their hands and went inside to where their mother, Aurelia, and their grandmother were waiting at the table for them.

“Where is Daniel?” Aurelia asked, as she poured the fresh milk into their glasses.

“He is getting my kite from the tree. He will be here soon,” replied Vincent.

Aurelia poured another glass to the brim with milk. “Tell him to have it when he comes.”

Vincent nodded.

Grandmother seemed displeased, “You serve a servant boy at your table?”

“We don’t treat him like a servant. He is like our own son. To Valeria and Vincent, he is like an elder brother,” Aurelia said.

Valeria and Vincent nodded in agreement.

“But he is a Jew!” grandma reminded.

“That doesn’t matter to us,” Aurelia shrugged.

Daniel climbed onto the tree where the kite had become caught. It was tall, and there was a rocky slope below. Cautiously, he stepped on the branch and leaned forward, attempting to relieve the tangled kite. Suddenly, a scampering squirrel ran over the branches and jumped right onto him, giving him a scare.

“Aaah!” Daniel shrieked as he slipped from the branch and landed hard on the rocks below. His motionless form now rested amidst the jagged stones, blood seeping from his severe injuries.

When Cassius, the Roman Centurion, returned home in the evening, he sensed a strange silence. Usually, the kids were noisy, either in the garden or helping out Daniel with chores.

“Where is everybody?” he wondered. “Aurelia!” he called out.

Aurelia came to him, her face and eyes all red and moist.

“What is wrong?” he asked anxiously.

Aurelia burst into tears. Cassius rushed to her side and held her. “What is it? What happened?” he asked again.

“Daniel had an accident. He was lying unconscious on the rocks when we found him. We carried him inside and called the doctor. It took time for him to gain consciousness. And when he did, he was writhing in pain. His body is aching badly. The doctor says the fall was fatal.”

“Which means?” Cassius’ eyes glistened.

“He won’t be with us much longer,” cried Aurelia.

Cassius went towards Daniel’s room. He gently opened the door. Daniel lay there with his eyes closed.

Soft moans escaped from his lips. He was tired, but couldn't sleep. His body was paining all over. With teary eyes, Valeria and Vincent sat beside him on a stool.

When they saw their father, they rushed to him with pleas.

"Pa, please do something. Don't let Daniel die!" cried Valeria.

"It's my fault. He was trying to take my kite," Vincent sobbed bitterly.

"Now children, don't cry. Daniel will be alright. We'll take him to the best doctors. He will be cured. Don't blame yourself for the accident," he gently patted Vincent's teary red cheeks.

Aurelia entered. "Children, leave Daniel alone for a while. Let him rest peacefully," she said and led them both out of the room.

Cassius walked towards Daniel and sat beside him. Daniel slowly opened his eyes and tried to manage a smile. "Sir, I could never repay you for the kindness you have shown me. You've treated me like your own son and" Daniel winced in pain.

"Don't strain yourself," Cassius softly patted Daniel's arm.

“I’m going to die,” Daniel cried.

“No, you are not! I’ll bring in the finest doctors. You’ll be alright. Don’t lose hope,” Cassius assured him.

Cassius summoned the best doctors in the land and was willing to pay any price, but all the doctors gave the same dismal analysis. Daniel was going down. He could hardly swallow food and water. His body had thinned down and his face was pale.

One day, Vincent stealthily crept into Daniel’s room, careful that his mother didn’t see him- for Aurelia had barred the kids from often going into the room and disturbing Daniel. He softly tiptoed near Daniel’s bed. Daniel’s eyes were closed and Vincent thought he was asleep. Vincent knelt beside Daniel’s bed and folded his hands in prayer, “God, please don’t let Daniel die. Please!” he whispered his pleas.

Daniel’s eyes twitched open, “Vincent?”

“Daniel, you won’t leave us and go will you?” he asked sadly.

“I don’t really want to, but if that is God’s will, then so be it,” Daniel answered. “But wherever I am, I will always remember you. I will ask God to make me your Guardian Angel so I can still come and take care of you.”

“But then I won’t be able to see you!” Vincent said.

Daniel smiled, “I’ll fan my wings around you to let you know I’m there.”

Vincent held Daniel’s hand, “I need you as my big brother...here with me.”

A tear rolled down Daniel’s eyes, “I wish too....”

“Isn’t there someone who can help us?” Vincent asked.

For a moment Daniel was silent, and then he spoke, “There is someone who I believe can help...”

“Who?” Vincent asked.

“His name is Jesus. I’ve heard him speak in the synagogue a few times and I’ve seen him do miracles. He gave sight to a blind man and cast out demons in the name of God. I’ve wanted to meet him, but there always was a big crowd around him and so I could never get to him. Something in my heart tells me....he can help me.”

Vincent’s eyes twinkled, “Jesus!” he whispered.

Vincent informed Cassius what Daniel had told him. “Let’s go find Jesus and bring him here,” Vincent said to his father.

Cassius glanced at Aurelia for her opinion. She nodded. “If Daniel feels that way, we should do it for him.”

Grandma intervened. “This is ridiculous! First, you bring in an orphan Jewish boy and treat him like your son, and then you plan on bringing a Jewish prophet home. What am I going to hear next?” Glaring warningly at Cassius and Aurelia, she added, “You are getting yourselves into big trouble. Once our people come to know of your Jewish interests and connections, there is no telling what will become of you,” she walked away indignantly.

“Let’s bring Jesus home,” Vincent asserted, unconcerned about his grandma’s mutterings.

Cassius pondered, “Let’s see what we can do.”

The next day morning, Cassius and his two assistant soldiers mounted their horses to carry out their routine rounds in the town of Capernaum. Near the synagogue, they noticed a large crowd.

“What is going on there?” Cassius asked an old man who was hurrying towards the synagogue.

“The great prophet Jesus is preaching in the synagogue,” the old man replied.

Cassius caught the name ‘Jesus’.

One of the soldiers asked, “So what? You have prophets often preaching in your synagogue. It’s not always so packed.”

“Jesus is not like the others. He is ‘real’. He does miracles in the name of God. The blind see, the lame walk and the deaf hear...” The old man raised his hands to Heaven with deep emotion. “God works great wonders through him!”

“Go your way,” Cassius said. The man bowed and moved on towards the synagogue.

The other soldier spoke, “I’ve heard of this ‘Jesus’. The Pharisees have been complaining about him. Ever since he has been around, they have been losing popularity. He gets all the attention.”

“Is he a real ‘miracle worker’ or is it all an act?” the first soldier asked.

“Why don’t we go see for ourselves?” Cassius suggested.

Cassius and the two soldiers tied their horses in the shade of a tree and went into the synagogue that was filled with people attentively listening to Jesus’ preaching.

Jesus was teaching the parable of the two sons. “When the father asked the first son to go work in the

fields he said ‘Yes’, but he did not go. When the father asked the second son to go to the fields he said ‘No’, but later he changed his mind and went. Which of these two sons did the will of the father?”

“The second son!” answered a man from the crowd.

“Yes. Of the two of them, he was the better one. But suppose the father had a third son to whom he asked to go work in the fields. He said ‘Yes’ and he did as he said. Which of these three would be the perfect son?”

“The third one,” said a lady.

Jesus nodded. “Yes, it is to this perfection that we are called. When God asks something of you, say ‘Yes’ and do your ‘Yes’.”

Presently, the gathering was disturbed by loud noises outside. All eyes turned in that direction. A group of men dragged in a boy bound by chains and brought him before Jesus. One of the men knelt and cried, “Have mercy on my son. He is possessed! The demon is tormenting him!”

Jesus consoled the man, and walked toward the chained boy who was hissing and cursing. The nearer Jesus came, the farther the boy dragged himself away. “Get away from me, Son of God! I will take the boy with me to the depths of Hell!”

Jesus' eyes reflected the rage he felt at those words. With power and authority, he rebuked the demon, "The boy belongs to God. I have come to free him from you and take him to Heaven. In the name of God who reigns in Heaven, I command you evil spirit to get out of the boy and leave him in peace. Be gone!" The evil spirit immediately left the boy's body with a loud roar, throwing him to the ground. Jesus knelt beside the unconscious boy and touched his eyes. The boy slowly blinked his eyes open and looked around, confused.

"You are alright now," Jesus said to him. "From now on you should lead a holy life and never let any demons take over you again."

The boy nodded. "Thank you, Rabbi. I will be good." The boy went back home with his father.

"Oh! That man is something," the soldier nudged his companion.

"No, the whole thing could just be an act," the other soldier said suspiciously.

"It is not an act," a man sitting nearby spoke, having overheard the remarks.

"And how do you know?" demanded the soldier.

“One day, a leper covered with sores came to Jesus. He stood far away and pleaded for healing. Jesus came towards him with no aversion people usually show towards lepers, touched him, and healed him.It was me,” the man testified.

The soldier looked closely at the man and then in amazement said to his companion, “I remember him. He is that leper whom we drove away from the market the last week! We chased him away on our horses, remember?”

The other soldier recollected the incident and displayed the same emotion of astonishment as he observed the clear skin of the healed leper.

“He heals!” the man affirmed again.

Cassius stood up to leave, “Let us go.”

The soldiers untied the ropes and mounted their horses. But Cassius didn’t do so. He turned to the two soldiers. “You both continue with the rounds. I’ll catch up with you later.”

The soldiers agreed. “Yes sir,” they responded and rode away. Cassius waited outside, listening to Jesus’ preaching. He wanted to meet Jesus. The Temple priest noticed Cassius standing outside.

“Sir, may I help you?” he asked.

Cassius looked embarrassed. “I...I want to meet that preacher.”

“Is there something wrong he has done?” the priest inquired.

“No. Nothing wrong! I need his help. You see, my servant boy is a Jew. He is very ill. He believes Jesus can heal him. So, I was hoping Jesus would.....”

“I shall tell him your need,” the priest assured.

The priest went inside the synagogue. Jesus had finished his teaching, and as the crowd started to disperse, he engaged in casual conversation with the people who remained. The priest informed him, “Rabbi, a Roman Centurion is waiting for you. His servant boy is ill. This man has a kind heart. Though a Roman, he had helped us build a synagogue. He respects the Jews. Kindly consider his request.”

“Alright, I shall go with him,” Jesus obliged.

Jesus and his disciples went to where Cassius waited. Cassius’s heart was moved with reverence for Jesus.

Jesus smiled kindly at him, “Lead the way. I shall come to your home and meet your servant boy, whom you love so much.”

Cassius fumbled for a few moments because he did not know what to say. Finally, he explained, “Lord, I’ve heard your words and seen your power. I now understand why Daniel has so much faith in you, despite all the doctors giving up hope, and his health deteriorating each day. Truly, I desire to take you to my home and give you the royal treatment you deserve. But considering my circumstances, I am unable to do that as it would give rise to unpleasant rumors if the Romans learn I’ve invited a Jewish prophet to my mansion.”

Jesus nodded understandingly. “Then what do you want me to do? If I have to heal Daniel, I will have to meet him, right?”

Cassius responded, “Lord, your words have immense power. I just witnessed it in the synagogue when you ordered the evil spirit to release the boy. Being an officer-in-charge I too have the power to give commands to the soldiers under me. When I say to a soldier to ‘Go!’ he goes and to another if I say ‘Come!’ he comes, and yet to another if I say ‘Do this!’ he does it. For those in command, their words have power. I believe Lord, that if you just say the word- right from where you stand, it will work what you command, for your power and authority transcends space and time.”

Jesus was amazed by Cassius's faith. Giving Cassius a friendly pat, he smiled approvingly and spoke to his disciples, "Never before have I heard such words of faith, and he isn't even a Jew! The Jews pride in having the staunch faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But now, see, the non-believers are coming to faith, stronger than the Jews! And these will be worthy to feast in the Kingdom of Heaven with the great ancestors of the Jews. No one can boast of his ancestry unless he himself imbibes the virtues his predecessors have shown him."

Facing Cassius, Jesus spoke, "As you have believed, so let it be. Go home now."

Cassius looked into Jesus' eyes and his heart was filled with hope.

"Thank you, Lord!" Cassius whispered, mounted his horse, and hurried back home as fast as he could.

Meanwhile, Daniel lay alone in his room. He was thirsty. Beside him, there was a table with a jar of water resting on it, but he was unable to reach out and grasp it.

Just then, a heavenly radiance lit up his room. He saw a tall man appear in the light. The man looked kindly at him, poured a glass of water, and helped him to sit up and drink. Daniel slowly sipped the water and

then looked curiously at the man. “Who are you?” Daniel asked the kind man “I’ve seen you somewhere before.”

The man smiled, “You’ve tried to meet me, but haven’t been able to reach me. Seeing the desire of your heart, I have come to meet you.”

Daniel’s eyes widened in amazement, “Jesus!”

Jesus smiled, stood up, and blessed him “Be healed! And may you continue to be a blessing to this family.”

Jesus disappeared, and Daniel felt a strange power surge through his body. His pain vanished, allowing him to step out of his bed and stand firmly on the ground. Overwhelmed with joy, he couldn’t help but jump several times.

Aurelia walked in carrying a tray with Daniel’s lunch. She stared in disbelief at the sight of Daniel jumping.

Cassius reached home and hurried down from his horse. He rushed into his house and went to Daniel’s room. Daniel’s bed was empty. Squeals of excitement could be heard from the backyard.

Cassius went outside. The kids, along with Aurelia, stood at the base of the tree where Daniel had climbed. With careful steps, he maneuvered over the branches,

reached for the entangled kite, and successfully freed it from the branches

“Yaaaaay!” Vincent yelled in delight as his kite blew in the breeze again.

“Come back down carefully!” Aurelia reminded.

“I’ll be careful,” promised Daniel.

Daniel caught sight of Cassius gazing at him with a warm smile. In response, Daniel smiled back and playfully winked at him.



Chapter 6

THE CURSE

“You naughty little boy!” cursed Zohar, the village shepherd as Jan stuck out his tongue, made a face at him, and scrambled away. Zohar chased him. Jan ran with all his might. Being short and stout, Zohar couldn’t catch up. “I’ll get hold of you later!” Zohar warned as the boy darted down the path. Jan hid behind the thick bushes, ensuring that Zohar wasn’t following him.

Heaving heavily, Jan peered through the bushes, his eyes fixed on the path ahead. He waited patiently for a while. Just as Jan was about to step out of his hiding spot, convinced that Zohar had given up the chase, he heard the sounds of men conversing and jovially walking along the path. Some of them were laughing heartily. Jan quickly slipped back behind the bushes and curiously peered at the men through the leaves. It was Jesus and his disciples who were on their way to Jerusalem.

Andrew spoke, “I’m quite tired. Shall we stop by somewhere to rest for a while?”

Jesus replied, “Yes. There is a village nearby where we can stay for today.” Glancing at the wayside trees Jesus added, “I’m quite hungry.” He caught sight of a

leafy fig tree directly across from the bushes where Jan was hiding. Jesus approached the tree.

“It's not the season for figs, but it appears to have a couple for us,” Jesus remarked. He searched closely, but to his disappointment, he couldn't find any.

“Usually when the tree is full of leaves it indicates there are figs, but this one doesn't have any,” said Peter.

“It will never bear any figs ever!” Jesus spoke.

Jesus and his disciples walked away. Jan stealthily crept out from his hideout and quickly ran back home.

The next day, as Jan and his two friends, Mark and Andy were on their way to the playground, he recounted his adventure to his friends. “I teased Zohar because he complained to my father that when we go to play, we chase his sheep away and don't let them graze in peace. Zohar chased me. I ran as fast as I could.”

His friends giggled, imagining the sight of short, stout Zohar running behind the swift Jan.

“How far did he reach?” laughed a friend.

“Hardly a few steps and Zohar began panting, his face all red.” Jan imitated what Zohar looked like and

his friends laughed. Pointing to the wayside bushes, Jan continued "...and here is where I hid. Zohar didn't see me. He...." something Jan saw suddenly drew his attention and Jan stared with his mouth open wide. His friends followed his gaze toward the dried-up fig tree on the opposite side.

Jan stood still for a few moments.

"What's the matter with you? Haven't you seen a fig tree before?" teased Andy.

"Not one that dried with a spell!" Jan exclaimed.

His friends glanced at him curiously. Jan proceeded to tell them the rest of the story, explaining how a hungry man had searched for figs on the tree and, upon finding none, cursed it, declaring it would never bear fruit again!

"And now, look! It's dried up...just like the curse!" Jan pointed at the shriveled tree.

The three boys gazed in surprise at the tree.

"That man sure has some power!" exclaimed Andy.

"If we meet him we could ask him to dry up Zohar!" joked Mark.

"I don't want to see him ever again," Jan decided.

The boys stayed clear of Zohar's sheep and began playing hide-and-seek.

"Mark's turn to count!" announced Andy.

As Mark began the count, Andy and Jan rushed for a safe hiding spot. Andy climbed up a tree and hid between the leaves. Jan headed for the bushes near the meadow.

"Here I come," declared Mark.

Andy thought the treetop would be a good hiding spot, but unfortunately, there were ants there that kept biting him, so he had to come out. Mark easily spotted him.

"Andy, you are out!" declared Mark.

Andy climbed down the tree with a frown. "Those ants! They've gotten all over me," he said, rubbing his back.

"Come, let's find Jan," Mark said. Andy had seen him run towards the bushes.

"He is somewhere among the bushes," he whispered to Mark.

Mark looked cautiously through the dense bushes, trying to identify anyone concealed within. He then spoke out loud, saying, "Jan, I know you're in the

bushes. Come out now.” Nothing happened. Mark turned to Andy, looking at him with a questioning expression. Andy shrugged and replied, “I saw him go in there.”

“If he is in there, we’ll drive him out,” Mark winked at Andy. He picked up a stone from the ground and aiming it at the bushes, flung it hard. The stone passed through the bushes and hit somebody.

“Ouch!” a voice sounded, but it didn’t sound like Jan; it was a man! Mark and Andy exchanged glances, and then peered over the bushes. They discovered that the stone had passed through the bushes and struck a man who had been peacefully sleeping in the shade of a nearby tree.

The man sat up and looked around. He spotted the two little heads peering at him from over the bushes. Picking up the stone, he asked, “Was this for me?”

“No,” Mark said. “I’m sorry. It was an accident. We were playing.”

“We didn’t mean to disturb you,” Andy apologized.

The man smiled. “It’s alright. It’s time for me to wake up anyway. But the hit was a bit too hard,” he said rubbing the spot where the stone had struck him.

The man stood up and asked, “What are your names?”

“I’m Andy.”

“I’m Mark...and you?”

“I’m Jesus of Nazareth,” the man said.

“Andy ...Mark...” Jan called out “Where are you?”

“Here!” Andy yelled back.

Jan came to the spot where the boys were. “I won!” Jan declared proudly as he came near them. But as he observed the man they were talking with, his face changed. He stared at Jesus with a curious glance that soon transformed into shock as he recognized the familiar face. “Andy! That’s the man who cursed the fig tree....Run!” Jan took to his heels and fled for his life.

Andy and Mark looked at each other and then at Jesus. Suddenly, they too felt terrified and sped away.

The disciples who were coming that way saw the three boys running away. Suspecting the boys had been up to some mischief, James and John chased them, caught hold of all three of them, and brought them to Jesus.

While James held firmly onto Jan's collar, John managed to catch hold of Andy and Mark.

Jan struggled, attempting to free himself from James' strong grip. "Not so fast you naughty kid!" James held him even firmer.

"What have you boys been doing to our Master?" John demanded.

"We didn't do it on purpose, honestly!" Andy cried.

"Please don't curse us!" Mark sobbed. "I don't want to be like the tree."

"What tree?" Jesus asked.

"The fig tree you cursed yesterday. I saw it!" Jan testified.

Jesus said to his disciples, "Let go of the kids."

The disciples released their hold. Jesus looked with kindness at the fear-stricken boys.

"What were you saying about the fig tree?" he asked Jan.

Jan gazed into Jesus' kind eyes, and then, he didn't feel so scared anymore.

Jan explained, “Yesterday while you and your friends were passing by, I was hiding behind the bushes. I saw you search for figs on the tree, and when you couldn’t find any, you cursed it. Now, just look! It’s all dried up!”

Peter went near the fig tree and examined it. He too was surprised to see the fig tree in that state. “It’s true. The tree has dried up!” he informed Jesus.

Jesus smiled at Jan, “Son, when I said that the fig tree would never bear fruit again, I was not cursing it. I was making a statement based on what I had observed. You see, fig trees covered with leaves usually indicate the presence of figs. Though this is not the season for figs and at this time, fig trees are not covered with leaves, this tree was. That made me curious. Besides, I was hungry too. So, I searched for figs on the tree. I couldn’t find any. I observed the tree and figured out that the tree was sick and would dry up soon. It wouldn’t bear any more fruit! So you see, no one could ever eat fruit from it again.”

“Oh! That’s what you meant,” Mark understood.

“So it wasn’t a curse after all!” Jan exclaimed.

“No, it wasn’t a curse. It was an statement based on observation. But there is something you can learn from it. The fig tree was deceiving people. It showed out

green shiny leaves even though it didn't bear fruit. Just like some people act they are good and shiny on the outside, but on the inside bear no fruit and have evil thoughts! Such people too will dry up soon like this fig tree. It's what is on the inside that counts," Jesus explained.

"How do I know if I have fruit inside?" asked Andy.



"If you truly love, care, and share, it shows you have fruit in you- sweet, succulent fruits that could delight anyone," Jesus replied.

The three boys looked at each other wondering if they really did.

Peter pondered over what Jesus said. He looked at the withered fig tree and voiced his thoughts, "I

wonder if I too have just shiny leaves on the outside and no fruit inside. I feel I have a mountain of drawbacks that could make me fruitless.”

Jesus said, “No matter how tall that mountain is Peter, if you have faith- you can immerse it in the sea of God’s mercy and it’ll melt away. For whatever you ask full of faith, you will receive. But always remember, to receive God’s mercy, you should be merciful to others too. Forgive and you will be forgiven too.”

Jesus turned to the children. “You children have hearts that love, care, and share. You boys have fruits in you. Keep them growing.” Jesus smiled at them. He then placed his hand on each of their heads and blessed them.

The boys were overjoyed.

“Now, go home. It’s getting late. Your mothers might be worried,” Jesus advised.

“Thank you,” the boys said joyfully.

Jan apologized, “I’m sorry I misunderstood you.”

“That’s ok,” Jesus patted his cheek. “You’ll remember me each time you have figs, right?” Jesus joked.

Jan smiled, "I'll remember."

The boys walked back home. On the way, they came across Zohar and his sheep. Jan smiled at Zohar. Zohar scoffed, "If you kids dare try to scare my sheep again, you'll have it from me!" he threatened.

Jan responded firmly, "We are never going to do that again. We don't want to rotten our fruit". Andy and Mark agreed.

Chapter 7

PETER'S SECRET WISH

Taking in a deep breath, Peter let the cool wind from the seaside fill his lungs. The breeze flapped at his clothes. Little Ivan held on tight to Peter. “Hold me Peter, I might get blown away,” Ivan said. Peter smiled and held Ivan close. Ivan looked up at Peter. He was staring far into the sea with yearning.

“What are you looking at?” Ivan asked.

“Something that I miss doing,” Peter replied.

“You were a fisherman right?” Ivan remembered, “You miss fishing?”

Peter smiled, “Sometimes.”

“Why don’t you go fishing again?” Ivan asked.

“No, I can’t. God has given me a bigger job, to fish for people. I left my boat and nets when Jesus called me. I’m never picking them up again.”

Holding little Ivan’s hand, Peter walked back towards the village. On the way, they met the temple tax collectors, who questioned them.

“Does your master pay the temple tax?” asked a man to Peter.

“Yes, he does,” Peter said.

“He said the other day that ‘What belongs to Caesar should be given to him’ so make sure he pays the tax!” sneered a Pharisee.

When Peter and Ivan reached the house where Jesus and the disciples were, Peter related the event.

Jesus spoke, “Peter, from whom do kings collect taxes, from their children or others?”

Peter replied, “From others.”

Jesus said, “Yes, logically, the children need not pay taxes to their father. We need not pay the temple tax for the temple belongs to our Heavenly Father. But let’s not offend anyone regarding this. Peter, do as I tell you: hire a boat, go out into the sea, and cast your net. In the mouth of the first fish you catch, you will find a four-drachma coin. Use that to pay the tax for both of us.” Jesus then looked at Ivan and smiled. “Ivan will come along with you. You would like that, wouldn’t you, Ivan?”

“Yes, I’d love that,” Ivan smiled.

All the other disciples were puzzled. “Why does Peter have to do all that? Why can’t we just take a coin from our purse and pay it?” whispered Philip to James.

James shrugged. “Jesus sometimes has strange ways of doing things. He sees something we don’t.”

Jesus looked at Peter, whose eyes were moist. “Peter, go do as I have told you,” Jesus said.

“Thank you,” Peter whispered and walked away with Ivan.

Once they reached the seashore, Ivan helped Peter pick a boat.

“Let’s get into that boat,” Ivan said excitedly.

Peter smiled, “As you say, captain!”

Peter helped Ivan climb into the boat and pushed it out into the sea. He then got on it and rowed. The boat glided over the waves elegantly and the cool wind was refreshing.

“Hold on tight Ivan, the sea could get rough,” Peter said.

“Where do we get the fish?” asked Ivan.

“Let’s try here. Put out the net.” Peter instructed.

Ivan and Peter let down the net. A while later, they pulled it up. There was just one fish caught in the net. Peter took it out and opened its mouth.

“Look Ivan! The coin! Just as Jesus had said!” Peter rejoiced.

"Hurray!" Ivan was thrilled.

After returning to the shore, as Peter and Ivan walked back to where the disciples were, they passed the Temple. The temple tax collectors were still there.

Peter handed Ivan the coin. “You may have the honor.”

Ivan smiled, took the coin, and went towards the Pharisees. “We pay tax too,” he said and showed them the shining coin resting on his little palm.



Chapter 8

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER

“My poor child!” wept René as she wiped the soup that had spilled from her little daughter Lisa's mouth. Twelve-year-old Lisa had been very sick for weeks.

She used to be the joy of the family, full of fun and laughter. But a severe fever had now kept her bedridden for days. None of the medicines the doctors gave could make her feel any better. And now, the doctors were of the opinion that she could never be cured.

Rene hopefully prepared Lisa her favorite dishes, which she used to hungrily gobble up. But now, poor Lisa could hardly swallow. Food didn't taste as good, and she found it difficult to even open her mouth and chew.

“Mummy I'm scared to die!” she softly murmured to her mother.

Rene set down the soup bowl, kissed her daughter, and tenderly stroked her head.

“There's nothing to fear. You won't die!” Rene exclaimed, her voice filled with emotion.

“I know I will,” Lisa said softly.

A few moments passed in silence. Then, Lisa spoke, "Mother, what does God look like?"

Rene gently touched her daughter's cheeks affectionately. "I have never seen Him, but I believe He looks like a very kind and loving Father."

Lisa sighed, "Mummy can I sleep on your lap for a while?"

Rene allowed Lisa to lay her little head on her lap as she softly sang a song, caressed her head, and ran her fingers through Lisa's brown curls. At the end of the song, she embraced her daughter. Rene instantly sensed Lisa's frail body had stopped breathing. A shiver ran over Rene as she realized her worst fears had come true. She felt Lisa's body again and confirmed that she was no longer breathing, her heart was not beating. Rene burst into loud cries that drew all the servants into the room. Lisa was dead.

Lisa's father, Jairus, the synagogue official, who had been speaking with the doctors in the living room, heard the cry. He rushed into the room where his wife and child were. Upon examining Lisa, the doctors glanced pitifully at Jairus and shook their heads, indicating that Lisa was lost forever. Jairus was shocked.

He couldn't bear the grief. Unable to face his lifeless daughter, he rushed outside the room and burst into sobs. Life without Lisa...he couldn't imagine!

Just then, a thought crossed his mind, bringing back hope into his moist eyes. He dried his tears and hurried outside.

"I'm going to meet someone... I'll be back soon," Jairus informed his brothers Jerome and Gershom, who were standing at the entrance of the house.

"Where are you going now?" Gershom asked, surprised and concerned.

Jairus didn't answer but just swiftly walked away.

Jerome, the older brother spoke to the younger one, "Gershom, go after Jairus. He is upset." Gershom nodded and followed Jairus.

Jairus was walking quickly, and Gershom found it hard to keep up.

"Jairus," he called out "Where are you going?"

Jairus didn't stop. He kept walking.

Gershom didn't say anything more but silently followed Jairus. After a few turns, Gershom could make out that Jairus was heading toward the synagogue. Once inside, Jairus began looking around frantically, searching for someone.

Catching hold of one of the priests, Jairus impatiently asked, "Where is the Rabbi who preached in the synagogue yesterday?"

“He left just a while ago. He said he was on his way to Jerusalem,” informed the priest.

Jairus hurried outside the synagogue, down the path to Jerusalem.

Now Gershom asked him again, “Jairus, my brother, are you out of your mind? You should be at home now, with Rene.”

Jairus shook his head, “I have to find him...”

“Him whom?”

“The Rabbi who yesterday came to the synagogue. He is a true man of God. He can do miracles,” Jairus gasped, almost out of breath.

“But he can’t raise the dead to life, can he? That is impossible!” Gershom exclaimed.

“He can...I know he can. I will beg him,” cried Jairus and sped away.

Gershom felt sorry for his brother. He didn’t know what to say. He knew this walk was futile. Lisa was dead. She could not be brought back to life. But he didn’t want to upset Jairus. So he let him have his way and continued to quietly follow him.

Jairus' face lit up when he spotted a group of men in the distance, walking down the dusty path to Jerusalem.

“That’s him and his followers,” Jairus exclaimed and ran towards them.

“Rabbi!” Jairus called out loud.

Jesus heard the call and turned around.

Falling at Jesus’ feet, he pleaded, “Have pity on my daughter. She has just died. But I believe if you come and place your hands on her, she can be raised from death.”

Jesus was moved by his faith and his tears.

He held Jairus’ hand and raised him to his feet, “I shall come with you.”

Jesus, accompanied by Peter, James, and John, followed Jairus and Gershom to the house. By now, everyone, upon hearing the news of Lisa’s death, had gathered, and the courtyard was crowded. There were many people around him, and Jesus had to inch his way through to get to the house. At one point, he stood still, turned around, and asked, “Who touched me?”

Peter, who was just behind Jesus, responded, “Jesus, the courtyard is packed with people. We have brushed past so many to get through, and you are asking who touched you?”

But Jesus firmly asked again to the crowd, “Who touched me? Of all the people around me, who brushed past me, there is one who touched me in a way

that power was drawn out from me. Tell me, who was it?"

After a brief pause of pin-drop silence, the feeble, shaky voice of a lady from the crowd confessed, "It was me."

Everyone curiously looked on as the lady knelt and bowed at Jesus' feet. She spoke, "For twelve years, I have been plagued by a serious bleeding illness that filled me with shame. No medicines could relieve me of the pain and the embarrassment of the disease. I had heard you preaching in the synagogue. I had seen you healing by your touch. I was too ashamed to face you and speak of my illness, so I never approached you. But my heart longed to meet you, for I had faith that you could help me. Today, when I saw you here, I was overjoyed. I thought it was the best chance I could ever get to come close to you. I believed that if I could only touch the fringe of your cloak as you walked past, I would be healed. I needn't tell you... you could still just heal... and you did." She burst into tears and kissed Jesus' feet.

Jesus was moved by her faith and her tears. He lifted her and blessed her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, forever free of the illness."

"Please, let the Rabbi in," Jairus pleaded with the crowd. "He will bring my child back to life." Jairus' heart filled with even more hope.

Inside the house, the flute players started playing funeral music, and people began mourning the loss of little Lisa. They started preparing for her burial.

“Jairus is out of his mind!” a lady whispered to another.

“Isn’t that the great prophet, Jesus? Maybe he can cure the sick, but can he give life back to the dead?” wondered a woman.

“Of course not! No one can do that but God!” declared an old man.

Jesus announced to the crowd, “Stop the flute players, for no funeral will take place here, and please do not mourn, for the child is only sleeping. She is not dead.”

Then the crowd began murmuring even more. “The Rabbi is crazy!” laughed a man.

A wise lady in the crowd suggested, “Maybe the Rabbi is right. Examine and make sure she is dead and not just in a deep trance.”

The doctors examined Lisa one more time. “She is not breathing. Her heart is still and her face is pale. It is confirmed that she has no life in her.” All doctors gave the same verdict again in front of the confused crowd.

Once this confirmation was obtained, Jesus entered the house with his disciples Peter, James, and John.

When Jesus entered the room where Lisa's body lay, he requested everyone else to leave the room except for Lisa's parents. Rene looked inquiringly at her husband, "Who is he?"

"A man of God. He will give us back our daughter," Jairus said with hope.

Rene wept, "Is it possible?"

After everyone had left the room, Peter closed the door shut as people were curiously peering in to see what Jesus was going to do.

Jesus gazed at the lifeless face of the pure, innocent child. She looked like an angel in her white dress. Though tired and worn out, there was a glow in her face that reflected grace.

Jesus sat beside her. Holding her hand, he then whispered the words, "Talitha Koum" which means, "Little girl get up."

Rene clutched onto Jairus' arm tightly. Both parents eagerly watched for signs of life returning to their beloved child's body. Lisa's dry lips slowly parted. Her eyelashes twitched. Her chest began to rise, indicating she was breathing.

Rene gasped, covering her mouth in wonder, while Jairus raised his hands to Heaven and thanked God.

Lisa slowly opened her eyes to the smiling face of Jesus. "Rise my child," he said and helped her to sit

up. Jesus then turned to Rene and spoke, “She must be hungry. Give her something to eat.”

Pointing at the soup bowl near the table, Jesus said, “Give her the soup you made for her. It’s her favorite isn’t it?”

Rene was so amazed that she could hardly move or talk.

“Shall we warm it up for her?” Jairus asked.

“No need. The warmth of Rene’s love would suffice,” Jesus said, placing the soup bowl into Rene’s hands.

Jesus then said to Jairus and Rene, “Do not tell anyone of this now. I shall leave with my disciples through the back door.”

“Thank you. You have returned life to my family,” Jairus knelt before Jesus. Rene did the same.

Jesus blessed them both and, with his disciples, made his way towards the back door.

Just then, Lisa called out to them, “Wait!”

Jesus and the disciples turned to her. With a sparkle in her eyes, Lisa spoke, “I saw God! He told me I was a good girl and He was returning me to my parents because through me He could be glorified. “

Jesus affectionately assured, “He will be glorified through you.”



Lisa smiled at Jesus. “He looked a lot like you....just that He had a long white beard and was a lot older than you.”

Jesus couldn’t help but smile. “I’m happy you felt that way.”

The disciples looked at each other and smiled.

Waving goodbye to Lisa, Jesus then left with his disciples..

John declared delightedly, “Jesus, now I truly believe even the dead can be raised to life. Nothing is impossible for God!”

“Jesus, can I ask you a question?” James inquired.

“Of course,” Jesus replied kindly.

“Why did you tell the people that the girl was only sleeping when you knew for sure she was dead?” James asked.

Jesus smiled, "Good question, James. I did that because I knew that when she is raised to life, some people might say that perhaps she wasn't really dead after all. She had just slipped into a state of unconsciousness and looked dead, and that I brought her out of that state and not from death to life. Once the doctors confirmed before the crowd that she was truly dead and had absolutely no signs of life in her, that's when the miracle could be performed and God be glorified."

The disciples nodded in understanding.

As they reached the bend of the road, they found the other apostles waiting for them.

Jesus directed, "Let's move on....to Jerusalem."

"We are a bit late now... might not be able to reach before dawn," calculated Andrew.

Jesus spoke, "We'll reach Jerusalem with the morning dew...just in time for what awaits us there. Come..."

Jesus strolled on, and his disciples followed him down the dusty road to Jerusalem.