

Living in Hope

Inspired by Mark 14:12-16, 22,26

On the first day of post-Pandemic 2021 Summer Break, when the schools were all closed and the stores were all open, Olivia's children said to her, "Where do you want us to go to find something to eat? We usually have breakfast and lunch at school and we can't find any food in the house now."

Olivia looked at the faces of her 5 precious children. She hadn't worked for nearly a month since the business where she worked for the past three didn't survive the pandemic. She barely made enough to keep the lights and water on and prepare a modest meal for supper. The school program had been a blessing to her family for sure. She hadn't found new work yet, but not for lack of trying! Her oldest son, John, just turned 15 and he told his mother that he had applied at the ice cream shop, and would begin next week. "That will help us, mom" he said. "Plus, I can bring home dessert!"

Olivia was planning to scour the town for a new job now that businesses were opening up. She had seen 'Now Hiring' signs up everywhere. Surely someone would want her. Being a mom is hard work. Being a single mom adds even more challenges. The children's father had started drinking and sinking when he was laid off last year. His weathered, calloused hands were not meant to be idle. Without a task to do, a machine to repair, a project to build, his hands ached for attention and played tricks on his mind. His main purpose in life had been silenced. His vocation stripped. He couldn't face his family once he couldn't provide for them. He convinced himself they were better off without him. The state would step in after he stepped out.

He was totally convicted this was the right thing to do when he broke the news to his beloved Olivia. He told her he was no help to them anymore. He felt tall and steely and utterly useless like an abandoned bridge to nowhere, no longer able to carry his family over the wide river. Olivia cried and pleaded with him, but he shook her off and walked out the door. No one has seen or heard from him in nearly a year.

When she lost her job, Olivia had similar thoughts of leaving for a fleeting moment. But, her Mama heart wouldn't even let her entertain the idea of abandoning her family.

She chose to live in hope. She would find work again. They would be OK and make it through another rough patch. She thought of her life like a patchwork quilt — all mismatched and segmented, but somehow held together and beautiful despite the rips and repairs. She is a woman of Faith and firmly believes that her Maker makes all things beautiful.

Olivia had heard they were setting up a care center in town for people just like her. Folks who were truly in need of support and practical assistance. These have been hard times - harder for some than others. She sent two of her children and said to them, "Go into the town square and a lady will meet you, carrying jugs of water and bags of groceries. Follow her. Whenever she enters say to the manager, "Our mother says, "Where is the room where we may get something for our family to eat?" Then, they will show you a large room filled with supplies and ready for the needy. Take only what we need to prepare meals for one week. Thank them for being there for us. Tell them once we have income again, we will volunteer our time to help others in turn.

The children went off, entered the town, and found it just as their mother had told them, and they prepared a box of food. Later that day, while they were eating, she took the bread, and said a blessing thanking God for His abundant graces on the family, that they would not go hungry this day. She broke the loaf, covered each piece with peanut butter, gave it to them and said, "Take it. This is good for your body." Then, she took a cup, filled it with water, and raised it high for all to see. She gave thanks to God that they will not thirst this day. She gave it to them, and they all drank from it. She said to them, "This is a gift from the Lord, who shed His blood as a covenant to all who believe in Him. Amen."

The children bowed their heads, and took turns naming a blessing and giving thanks to God for this day with all glory to the Kingdom of God. Then, one of the girls began singing a hymn. There were many smiles and giggles and chatter filling the house as they filled their bellies. One would only notice the praise and thanksgiving of this family returning to the Lord all that He has done for them. The bond with the Lord and each other is a patchwork quilt of love and blessing.

Then they all went out in the yard to play before Olivia set out to find new work and provide for her family once again.

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