

Pandemic Christmas Dinner

A Modern Day Parable inspired by Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of our Family Christmas Dinner in the year of the Pandemic, as it is written by Uncle Bart, on December 26, 2020.

It had been 7 years since the whole family was together for Christmas, or any other occasion, as a matter of fact. COVID brought great awareness to the stunning thought that it had been so long. Families sometimes grow apart and it usually takes a tragedy to remind us what is important, and what is not worth holding on to.

People around the world were returning to God, remembering their baptismal promises, and choosing to reach out to those with whom they had lost touch. When you are on lock down and not permitted to travel it seems to be all you want to do. Old hurts and disputes seem less serious. All the guidelines for safety in not spreading the virus centered around staying close to home with family. Social gatherings with friends would have to wait until this time passes. The mandates to stay with family made Martha reach out to her four children who were grown and still living in the area, but she didn't see them much...and she wasn't getting any younger. I, Bart, am her only living sibling. We had both lost our spouses, so for the past two years, I have lived with Martha. We are a great help to each other.

Surprisingly, all four of Martha's children agreed to come home for Christmas. It would be a cozy, quaint Christmas hopefully reconnecting the family and bringing joy. Her oldest son, Carlton, arrived first to prepare the way for the others. He had always felt a responsibility to lead his younger brothers and sister — sometimes to a fault. He paved a path that was a hard act to follow. Carlton was a straight A student, valedictorian, an Eagle Scout, student body president, and had graduated at the top of his class in law school. His law firm was one of the most well-known in the area.

Carlton kept in close touch with his mother and all the other children, though they didn't communicate much with each other. He even stayed close to the youngest, Jimmy, who seemed rebellious and led a lifestyle none of the others approved of. Christmas Day was off to a great start with Bart, Martha, and her three oldest children. Jimmy wasn't there yet, but no one seemed to notice. Everyone had been doting on Carlton and touting his great success. It seemed he had made the perfect life for himself, and everyone was just naturally drawn to his star-like personality. People wanted to be in his presence and learn from him so they could be more like him. His brothers and sister were no different. Carlton loved all the attention and he presented his family with expensive, lavish gifts.

Jimmy finally arrived just as all were sitting down for dinner. He was dressed in old, ragged jeans that were saggy, with a leather belt around his waist. He had long hair and a long, unkept beard. He was a vegan and fed off plants and wild honey. The mood in the room changed dramatically when he entered. It was as if all the joy had been sucked out of the air. All eyes were on Jimmy. They seemed to be in shock and disbelief that he would come to Christmas dinner late, and dressed like that.

Carlton knew why Jimmy was late that day, so he broke the silence and proclaimed, "Jimmy has done things mightier than me. I have worked my whole life that I might get ahead. Jimmy works so that others may get ahead. He spent this morning at the shelter for homeless men. He cooked them a grand Christmas dinner, provided soap and clean clothes for all the men, and gave each one a haircut and hot shave so that they could present their best selves on this glorious day celebrating the Lord's birth. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the strap on Jimmy's sandals. I brought you material gifts, he will bless you with his humble spirit. Welcome home, Jimmy!"