

The Family Inquisition

A Modern Day Parable inspired by John 1:6-8, 19-28

After dinner and dessert, the family inquisition began and Christmas peace was threatened. Martha had simply wanted her 4 grown children to reconnect so they could feel like family again. They had drifted apart, and gone their separate ways. It had been 7 long years since they had all shared a meal together, and this pandemic made it feel like 7 X 70 years. So Martha summoned them all home for Christmas dinner. All responded and showed up, but it seemed like they barely knew each other anymore. The air was filled with an awkward combination of thick, coldness and separation, and warm, delicious aromas of childhood dinner favorites.

This is the testimony of Jimmy, the youngest child, although he is now a grown man in his early 30s. When his older siblings first saw his rugged appearance and heard his testimony of serving the men living in a homeless shelter, they asked him, "Who do you think you are, a Savior?" He admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not a Savior."

So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you a Social worker?" And Jimmy said, "I am not." They were uncomfortable with his simple answers, and his calm demeanor put them on edge. So, they dug in for more information. "Are you a private investigator?" He said, "No."

So they said to him, "Who are you so we can know who our baby brother has become? People will ask us, and we, ourselves, are quite curious. "Are you, yourself, actually homeless? Are you on drugs? Are you having a mental breakdown? What do you have to say for yourself?"

He said: "I am just a servant of The Savior. I am one person who serves food to some of the poor, just as our eldest brother Carlton told you when I first arrived. I am hopeful more people who have more than enough food and money will share with those who have little or none."

This still didn't satisfy the family's curiosity. They moved in closer like a pack of wolves hungry for more details. The gates were opened and their bottled-up questions came flooding into the room. Jimmy didn't mind, though. He knows we learn by asking. We grow by digging deep, asking the challenging questions, and being open and honest with our answers. He was glad they were speaking *to* him directly, rather than speculating and talking *about* him behind his back.

Their sister finally asked, "Why do you dress like that, and keep your appearance like you are one of them if you are not homeless and troubled?" Jimmy answered, "What I look like matters little. I do my small part to help the people in my midst, but there are people in need among you whom you do not recognize. The One who calls me to give love and food to the poor, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie, also calls each of you to love and help others. Now you know why I do what I do. It is so good we are all here, and that this conversation happened at home with Mom, where we were all raised and first learned to love."