

The King's Gift ~ A Parable ~ ~ ~

The people looked up at their king as he presented himself on the balcony. "I have a wonderful plan for my kingdom," he bellowed. The crowd roared with applause for they loved their mighty king. They had waited three days for him to emerge from the castle and address them. He raised both arms and declared, "I have been seeking guidance from my forefathers and have now discovered a new way for us to be the greatest in all the lands!" His followers cheered and hugged one another. They were delighted and would do anything for this king.



He was different from all the other rulers they had ever known. He was young, yet wise. He was rugged, yet handsome. He held the highest position, yet he was very humble. He just had a way about him. When he spoke, they were captivated. And all wanted to be near him. The king was often found walking throughout the village in plain clothes getting to know his people. They knew he loved them, and he was dearly loved by them.

The king looked out at the hundreds who had gathered just to hear him speak. "Follow me and you will never again want for anything," he said. "I hold the secret to true happiness and it is my gift to you. Follow me and you will never know sadness again!" Thunderous cheers and tears of joy spread throughout the crowd. When the noise died down, the king continued in a softer, more somber voice. "I will need your help. What I command is a new way to live, unlike that which your ancestors taught and lived. My way does not entail a long and complicated list of rules, yet it will not be easy. Will you follow my way?"

"Yes! Yes! Anything for you, our king!" they yelled back. Families began offering their livestock, their stores of food, their very livelihood. They wanted this gift. They believed he held the key to eternal joy. No more would they have to labor for long hours with so little to show for it. Neighbor encouraged neighbor. Bring him your first fruits! Bring him everything. Let us rejoice. Without any details, nearly every villager agreed to follow the king, they trusted even though they did not fully understand his plan.

But, there was one sect of the kingdom who did not buy into this new plan. They argued among themselves and were fearful about beginning anew. They were stuck in their ways and preferred to stay the same, even though there was not much joy in it. It was familiar. They could not bring themselves to be so vulnerable and believe this young king spoke the truth. "How could he expect us to follow this new plan?" they muttered. "If we believe and obey his command, we may be left without. We may one day need what he asks us to give. We cannot be so careless. It just isn't sensible," they argued. They were unwilling to surrender control of their lives. They worked hard and had been taught to be independent. They did not need the others. This way of thinking had served their people well for generations, and it served their purpose also.

The king was well aware of this group who dwelled in his kingdom yet doubted his plan. He set out to pay them a visit and address them directly. He arrived on foot, alone, without his royal guard. He looked at them with love and said, "I will not force you to obey my commands." He caught them by surprise. They stood in silence and listened as their king continued. "You have the freedom to disagree with my plan and continue living your own way," he said. "But, I invite you to follow me. I assure you my plan is better than any you could possibly dream of. When you follow me, you follow a greater king who reigns even over me. Whoever remains in my kingdom with me will live in true abundance. Following the way of your ancestors will fulfill you on this day, but my way has everlasting fulfillment. I will give you a greater life than you have ever known."

