

You Can Take it with You

inspired by Luke 1:39-56

Marcy packed her suitcase and prepared to head cross country to her hometown of Jennings. Now that she was fully vaccinated, she decided to take a trip home to visit her cousin Liz and husband Wyatt in their home. They were her only living extended family and she missed them dearly. Marcy and Liz were born within days of each other and grew up like sisters. Their mothers were twin sisters and the bond with these women was tight. Marcy checked her suitcase once more. She admired the delicate pink rose pattern on the inside. This was her mom's suitcase from childhood and Marcy preferred it over all the new fancy luggage on the market. Somehow she felt close to her Mom as she packed it -- like she was traveling with her.

It was packed to the brim with gifts for all the holidays and birthdays they had to spend apart because of the pandemic. She was taking more clothes than necessary -- a habit she would likely never break -- but she was working remotely these days, so she had no set return date. She wanted to be prepared for every occasion. There was much to celebrate! What a blessing to have this freedom of time with absolutely no stress about fitting it all in, and no worry about leaving disappointed with something left undone.

Liz hadn't been able to sleep from the excitement and anticipation of this visit, and she was up most of the night cleaning and baking. Wyatt was worn out by her pacing nervously for the last hour, looking like she just might unravel from the inside out. He imagined her exploding with confetti once her cousin finally arrived. When Liz heard Marcy's car drive up, she ran out to greet her. Wyatt and the dog even jumped up, filled with excitement, too! It had been so long since they had a visitor -- especially their favorite one! Liz could hardly contain herself and took off down the gravel driveway, waving and yelling loudly over the crunch of the rocks.

As soon as Marcy stepped out of her car, Liz exclaimed, "God bless you, Marcy! And, God bless us all! You're here! You're really here!" Then without even taking a breath and nearly squeezing the breath out of Marcy, Liz began a mile-long strand of questions leaving no room for punctuation or responses. "How was your trip.....any trouble along the way.....did you catch any rain.....are you hungry . . I'll bet you're starved.....you probably want a drink first....." Then, she stepped back to look at Marcy and let her breathe finally. "Oh mercy, let's get you inside first! Here, let me help you with your luggage. You look fabulous!"

Both women burst into tears. They were tears wrapped in joy and giddiness, with a strong undercurrent of deep sorrow for all they had endured over the past year and a half. Not only had they missed birthdays and holidays, but both of their mothers passed away within days of each other during the lock-down last spring. Covid prevented Liz & Marcy from being present to console and

comfort each other. The wonder of it all loomed over them like a thick blanket of darkness, unlike anything they had ever experienced in their 32 years. But, bursting through were the little girls who used to play tea party and hospital with their dolls -- they cried happy and sad tears together so many, many times over their lifetime.

When they finally made it all the way inside the house and Marcy was settled in the guest room, Liz hugged her cousin again. This time it was gentle and their hearts were hugging in gratitude. She said, "I was so fearful I would never see you again. It sometimes felt like the world was gonna end! But you always believed this day would come." The two women sat in the bed and held hands. Even though not much had changed on the outside, so much felt right and repaired right here. The bed was softer. The air was fresher. The light was brighter.

Liz wiped away her tears and looked into Marcy's eyes. She always thought they looked like blue crystal pools. She looked deeply into those pools and felt like she could dive in and be forever happy. "Marcy," she spoke calmly now, not in her usual announcer voice. "You always reassured me and told me we just needed to be patient. Just wait and trust, you said. You really never doubted, did you? We prayed for this day and now it has been fulfilled. I feel so blessed. Thank You, Lord!"

Marcy put her arm around Liz and gave her a little squeeze. "That's the spirit, Liz! Our souls have always been united. We have got to believe in God's abiding love and mercy. Our wonderful moms were given the ultimate grace of Union together with Him in Heaven. They are now in His loving embrace. Almighty God has done great things for our family, Liz. Holy is His name. And He will continue His blessings for generations to come. He has mercy on all, even those who struggle and live in fear — in every generation.

"He has shown His strength is greater than any evil that enters the world. We are all made equal. I believe that now fewer people look at others and see their skin color. Few see differences. More people than ever in our lifetime were in need. Even the mighty had to come down from their mansions to have their basic needs met. Some were even helped by those they had once considered lowly."

"You know, you are absolutely right!" Said Liz. Her voice was once again reaching its usual high pitch of passion. "The rich learned from the poor what it's like to go without. The proud learned from the meek what is truly important. We are all forever changed having seen empty streets and abandoned stores. May we all remember His promise of Mercy. It is the same promise He made to our mothers, and to us, and to our children, their children, and their children's children, forever and ever."

They both gave a resounding "Amen" in unison. Marcy stayed with Liz for three months. She left behind a deep sense of peace and genuine love where she returned home.

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