

THE PARABLE OF THE STRANGER

One day a strange man came. He was different than the people there, and his mannerisms were not quite up to standards. Oh, he looked like everyone else, but he had a distinct air about him that set him apart from the rest. He spoke as one having authority, and this irritated the elders. How dare he speak like that to them instead of listen respectfully, and follow everything they say. After all they were the elders. Then to make matters worse he became very popular with the people for he spoke to their needs, and showed love and kindness. He even played with the children.

The elders and leaders of the community though he was out to take their place by winning the support of the people. This was intolerable, he was not a part of them, he was just a stranger. So, the elders gathered together to discuss what to do about the fellow. They concluded that he was deceiving the people by his unusual power, and was trying to set himself up as leader. They had the man brought to them by force and stood him in their midst. They demanded to know who he was and what he wanted. They wanted to know why had he come there and what he intended to do. However, the man did not answer them, he stood silent and took their abuse. After some debate it was decided to take the man outside the city walls and kill him. This would put an end to it, and things would get back to normal.

Three days later as dawn broke over the horizon a very strange thing occurred. On the very spot where the stranger died there appeared out of the blood soaked ground a large leather like bubble. It was four feet in diameter, and stood three feet high. By the time word reached the elders there was quite a crowd gathered around this peculiar looking pouch. It was determined that it was flexible for it moved slightly at the touch, something liquid seemed to be inside.

A poor man with no family was brought to the elders. He was given a knife and told to cut a hole in the upper portion of the sack so that what was inside could be seen. He took the knife and with trembling hands cut a large X in the leathery bubble. A golden liquid stained the blade of the knife as he cut. After the X was made he gently pulled back the flaps from the center of the cut. The elders shoved the man back from the pouch, and stood staring into the hole. It was filled with a golden liquid that caught the morning sunlight.

The elders sent a young woman standing nearby to get a cup, and when she returned it was decided that she should dip the cut into the liquid and bring some of it out for further examination. With the grace of a woman, and the carelessness of youth, she plunged the cup deep into the hole and drew out the cup full of the golden liquid. Some of it ran down the outside of the cup and onto her hand. She seemed to suffer no ill effects from the liquid, so one of the elders took the cup.

The people then pushed forward and begin to dip their hands into the liquid that left a golden glow to their skin. Then they begin to apply the liquid to the other parts of their body. Suddenly one man shouted that the wound on his hand was healed when the golden

liquid touched it. So, those with injuries began to shove past and apply the liquid to their wounds, boils and blemishes, and they were all cured. There was joy and a festive air took hold of everyone. Even old grievances were cast aside, and good will permeated the place.

The elders watched a while, and then decided there had to be some organization to this. They just could not have these people all running to the pouch. It would soon all be depleted, they reasoned. So, they appointed a man to stand before the bubble, and set forth rules and laws concerning the pouch. Only the minister could dip into the pouch and apply the golden liquid to the people. If someone was hurt or had something that needed to be healed they must come to the Minister of the Pouch and he would pour a small amount of the liquid on them. It was all very orderly, and people would come and form lines to wait their turn.

Now there was in this place a man missing one leg from an accident in life. Because of his disability, he was not able to walk, work, or care for his needs. Life was passing him by, and he had become bitter. If this liquid heals, then perhaps he now had hope. He, like the rest, waited his turn in line, hoping the golden liquid would do something for him. Finally, it was his turn, and he stood head bowed before the minister and waited. The liquid was applied, but it could not be applied where the missing limb was, so the man went away disappointed, and still in his maimed condition.

He cursed his life, and was envious of the ones who came away healed. It was just not right that he could not walk and enjoy the things others seemed to take for granted. If an application of this golden liquid to a wound in the flesh healed, what would happen if someone drank of it? He thought upon this for sometime. Then late one evening with his crutch under his arm he sneaked outside the city where the pouch was, and when the minister was not looking he dipped a cut into the liquid and hobbled away.

In the seclusion of his little lean-to he pondered the golden liquid. It might kill him, but what was life to him anyway. Not even death could be worse than living as half a man. With a steady determination he put the cup to his lips, closed his eyes, and took a sip. Much to his surprise the taste was sweet, and he drank deeply of it. He could feel a change take place within him, his heaviness was replaced with joy. In delight he watched with tears streaming down his face as the missing limb began to grow. Soon he was a whole man, and could walk in life. But, he knew his walk would be different than the others for it was because of the golden liquid that came from the blood of the stranger the elders had slain outside the city walls.

When the people asked him how he got a new leg to let him walk he would tell them how he drank the liquid. The elders were wroth with the man for he had stolen some of the golden liquid, and had not come to the minister. Further the liquid was to be poured upon, not imbibed. He had broken the rules, and he was excommunicated from the city for his crime. However, he did not care, for he could walk in newness of life. He was a whole new man now, and no longer bound to his old limited ways. He could go anywhere and experience what before was only wishful thinking, and that was enough for him.

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