



Two God Love Stories

from

Wiston Pinzon – Manila, Philippines

STORY 1

AA will be 57 years old this October. Although most of her teeth are missing due to lack of dental care since childhood, this has not stopped her from encouraging her neighbors to attend my Bible study. She knows deep inside her that she is a Christian, and wishes that the rest of the people around her would come to the Lord too. She has learned not to make a big fuss about those who do not want to hear about Jesus; her attempts to bring them to the Lord only elicited from them either smirk or silence. She lives in a dilapidated shelter with her daughter nicknamed JJ, who has a one-year old malnourished child. JJ is a young woman whose hopes for a better life have been sadly lost and forgotten by lack of education. AA has another son whom she fondly calls MM. When you look at him the first time you would think that he had had nothing to eat for a week. Though he has a jolly disposition, his eyes betray some hidden pain, and his body shows symptoms of inner disease. He looks wan and weak. He is an industrious young man. Only 20 years old. He would rise up early to work in a junk shop, sorting our plastic materials. He is paid by the kilos he has segregated. This has not really helped them much, for the whole system in which they move is a trap that seems to have no way of escape. Poverty of mind, soul, spirit, body, and the social life, is an entropy of the human heart. It is slow killing. This poverty has a way of forcing people into a quagmire of drudgery and hopelessness. Last week MM was rushed to a hospital after vomiting blood.

I met AA some four months ago. We immediately developed a sense of kindredness by virtue of same ethnic roots. She would always volunteer to accompany me in my visitations in the community. Congested small houses, muddy paths on rainy days, dirty-looking children running around, methane and smoke-filled air, families sorting out garbage and junk materials, young men playing basketball in the yard using improvised board, constitute the community—an odd place to find God and what He might be doing. AA has been living in this condition for the last ten years, and she is used to it. There is no other home except this one. One day AA did not show up. This continued for a week. I heard that she got sick with diarrhea. She could hardly get out of her bed. I visited her and prayed for her recovery. I left her with a bag of santol. She peeled them off slowly and ate a lot with relish. Unknowingly, the fruit helped a lot in her recovery. She and JJ would later say that I was heaven-sent... that her life was saved because of me...because of my kindness...because of the fruit...because of the grace of God. I wished they had everything that I could have. I just wanted to share some fruit coming from a tree in our lot. They praised God for his grace. It was really the Lord who was taking care of them, and I, on my part, like an ordinary instrument needing some polishing and cleaning itself, was picked up by the divine hand, to serve His purpose. I didn't know God was doing precisely that. This is not the end of this wonderful God-story.

Her husband works as a construction worker in another place. He comes home once a month to be with AA and the children. His income is not really enough to sustain their daily needs, so she ends up by

hiring herself to an owner of a small food outlet to do kitchen chores. Her income from this job, which is not everyday, is meager, to say the least.

I wanted to help her. I gave her some money to start a small business—something that she can sell fast during the day, and have income before night falls. She planned to buy the necessary things the following day and start her business. However, early the next morning, MM vomited blood. The money which was intended for business was used for his immediate medical attention. It was not much but it helped him live another day. It was found out that he has an enlargement of the heart and tuberculosis. In the midst of all this uncertainty JJ and AA realized that I came at the right time again in their lives. When they needed help, I was there. But the greater realization they have is the fact that it was really God who was taking care of MM.

An Englishman, a very gentle one, who was with me, saw her plight. He would give some money to buy medicines for the treatment of MM's illness. I am hoping that it is not too late for him, that he will receive the grace and love of God fully, that no matter how poor he is, God's rich mercy has always been with him. If people wouldn't come to the Lord through riches, perhaps, poverty, will do the work. It is in this sense that indeed, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

STORY 2

Ef is a fellow-worker in the vineyard of the Lord. He is 56 years old, gutsy, and unmindful of other people's reaction to his evangelistic fervor. He doesn't mind using his old, hole-laden shoes. The challenge he would always face is how to trudge the paths of the slum community without getting both of his feet wet. His heart is willing to go anywhere, but his poor shoes, is not. If it has brought any comfort at all, it is the fact that it has become a constant reminder of his industry in bringing the good news of the Lord to the less fortunate. The wet season which came in June has limited Ef's movement. If he ever had extra money, buying new shoes would not be his priority. I am guessing that he has been praying for a new pair of shoes.

One day my mother-in-law arrived from the United States. In one of the boxes she brought with her was a new pair of sturdy, high-cut shoes. When I saw it, I thought of Ef. I told Mom about Ef's shoes. She readily gave it. The next time I went to the area I surprised Ef with the new shoes and three new pairs of thick white socks. He was very happy to say the least. That precise moment when someone receives a gift that he really needs is a moment made in heaven. It is a moment when the human heart touches the heart of God, for the heart of that man has turned toward God in praise and worship, and the eyes of that heart has been filled with hope. If there were ever were tears, they are tears of gladness.

The following day Ef confidently walked the wet and muddy paths of the community. He chanced upon a group of mothers, fathers, and children, mourning the death of a loved one. Wakes like this one is a public event. It goes on for at least a week. It would take this long because relatives from the provinces are expected to come, but may be delayed due to distance and the need to find money for fare and help. Ef's meeting with these people is nothing more than providential. He had the opportunity to share the gospel to them. The place, for some minutes, ceased to be a place for mourning the dead; for something holy, something sacred, descended upon the people. The word of God works in the hearts of men and women in ways that are beyond the knowledge of the most intelligent. The greatest threat to mankind is not poverty but the Gospel of Jesus. For the gospel makes people decide radically whether or not to follow Jesus and surrender everything to Him. They prayed to receive Him. Ef had nothing to offer to the dead, but to the living ones, he made sure they knew about the love of God for them. Doing

evangelism in the streets of London or going to the slums of Metro Manila to plant church are both glorious endeavors, for “Lovely on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news.”

And how did this happen? It was the new shoes. Ha,ha,ha. The shoes made it possible for Ef to go and share the gospel. The old one served as a perfect alibi for not going out. He would proudly announce that his shoes made it possible for him to wade through the shallow water and mud. Ef experienced the care of God through the shoes, and those men and women, heard about the love and grace of God.

Also, I knew that Ef has been having a difficult time earning his income. He buys old bicycles, repairs and repaints them, and sells them. When he got sick a few weeks ago, whatever savings he had was used to buy his medicines. I loaned him some money so he can start again with his business. I saw the relief in his face. But I don't mind at all if he could not pay me back. Freely I have received, freely I will give.