

The King's Special Treasure

By Dorothy Wolgemuth

Have you ever wondered what God thinks of you? Yes, you know he loves "The World," but what about you personally, individually? He's probably interested in the big important famous people, but what about you. You've never done or been anything real special. Does He really care about you?

Once upon a time in a far-off land, there was a very wealthy, powerful, and wise king beloved of his people. He owned many, many things. He had lands, forests, and farms. He had animals, herds, and flocks of domestic and exotic creatures. He owned treasures, silver and gold, pearls and precious stones. He had horses and carriages for any occasion--from hunting to important occasions of state. He owned clothes made of only the finest and most expensive materials imported from faraway places: silk from the east, soft wool from the islands, cotton and linen from the south dyed in rich hues and some elaborately embroidered or woven.

The inside of his castle was exquisitely furnished and adorned with all kinds of costly goods. There was beaten gold and silver overlay and inlay as well as beautiful carvings on the walls and furniture. Draperies and tapestries were embroidered with flowers, animals or scenes of important events, often with gold and silver threads. Carpets were of deep thick pile, soft and warm to walk on with intricate designs made of many colors of dyed wool.

His eating utensils were made by skilled craftsmen, each one a work of cunning design, goblets, mugs, plates and bowls, each one crafted of gold, silver, or brass. On the walls of the palace hung great pictures, works of magnificent art, for only the most gifted and talented artists had their pictures in his palace.

His army was the best equipped and trained in that part of the world. Their armor was made of fine steel mesh with sturdy steel, helmets, swords tempered and polished to hold a sharp edge and not to break under stress, shields large and sturdy, yet light enough to be easily handled.

The king shared his vast kingdom and wealth with his son, his only child, born to him by his queen on her death bed. He was the joy of the king's heart and he loved him dearly. They were inseparable. In a time when children were raised by royal nurses, the king insisted the child stay in his room and be cared for by himself. As he grew older the king and the young prince did everything together, whether it was out riding, hunting, visiting other kingdoms, or even sitting on the royal throne holding court. The king even had a small throne made next to his for the prince. As the king heard a case, the boy would look up and copy his father's expression, brow furrowed, concentrating on listening. Always the prince was by the king's side, dressed just like the king only in miniature. As the prince grew, he became more and more like his father; the same mannerisms, voice patterns, and facial expressions. A saying went around the kingdom. "If you've seen the prince, you've seen the king."

But as many as the things the king and his son shared there was one thing for which they were both most passionate. The one thing which they valued more than all their vast wealth and splendor was their own special treasure. It was not a large thing and those in the kingdom who had never seen it and only had heard of it, wondered at the king's and his son's love for and attachment to this particular treasure. "Why would he be so devoted to something which could be carried in a small bag?" they asked. But those few fortunate who had had the privilege of seeing, understood. The king's treasure which he valued and prized above all else in his kingdom (rumor even had it that he would be willing to trade his entire kingdom for this treasure) was his bag of gems. Now this was not an ordinary leather purse such as men use to carry their coins in, nor did it contain the ordinary sort of gems one may expect to find at the jewel merchants on market day. This bag was made of deep purple satin embroidered with fine silver and gold threads. The drawstring was of pure spun gold and the lining was of rich, thick green velvet with small pockets for each gem so as to protect them. The gems themselves can hardly be described as there was not their equal on the face of the earth. Each one exquisite, completely unique. Not one was exactly like another. They were of every precious stone known to man. Some were large and some were small - often the smaller ones having a clearer brilliance or brighter fire than the larger. They were of different shapes and cuts and each one cut to bring out the beauty of that particular stone to the greatest degree. There were stones of different sizes of the same type. There were white diamonds, blue and yellow diamonds. There were sapphires of light and dark blue shades as well as star sapphires, rubies of deep, deep red and those of a lighter almost pink or rose color. There were emeralds deep green as the forests and lighter ones the color of the sea. There was smoky topaz, golden amber, blue-green turquoise, fiery opal, light green aquamarine, orange-red garnets, pink tourmalines, and on and on. The exact number and kinds were

known only to the king, and to his son.

They had started collecting the gems when the prince was still quite young, and the activity had only increased the bond between the two. They would take special trips together when they heard of rare gem finds to see for themselves and pick out the ones they wanted to add to their treasure. They had experts in gems searching the world for the best. And gem merchants were always welcomed in the castle in hopes that maybe they had found another unique special gem.

Every evening after the busy work of the day had been finished, the king would retire to the upper room in the palace along with his son. Together they would examine and enjoy the gems. The king had a special table built, covered with black velveteen and built up on the sides so none of the jewels would fall off and be lost. He and his son would sit up there each evening, sometimes to the midnight hour. If one could listen at the door, one may have heard, "Father, which one is your favorite?"

"My son, they are all my favorites, for each one is the very best of that kind of stone. There is not one like another and should I lose one, there would be none to take its place. I would have such a sense of sadness and loss. No, it's unthinkable that I should ever lose even one." With this, he began to pick up the jewels one at a time and hold them so the light would hit them. "Now son, look at this one. See how it sparkles? See the rich, deep color? Now look at this one. See how it makes the light seem to dance and brings joy to our hearts?"

"Yes, Father, I see," said the son.

"My son, to each one I have given a special name. Only I know what it is, but I will teach it to you for one day you must take my place and you will learn to love these jewels as much as I do. This one that makes the light seem to dance is called 'Dancing Star'. This one of deep, deep green I call 'Contentment'. This one of rare clarity and luster I call 'Purity'. Watch closely my son, learn their names and their number, for one day you will be their guardian." Father and son bent over the table exclaiming over each one as they examined it and held it up to the light, joy quickening in their hearts at the sight of each one, each one valuable, each one special, each one unique, priceless, the only one of its kind.

The boy grew and became a man. He did learn to love the jewels as his father did and each evening, up

in the tower, they could be found. "Father, look at this one. How beautiful it is."

"Yes son, look at this one. It seems to be filled with laughter. Remember its name is 'Bright Laughter'."

But one day a terrible, terrible thing happened. The king had an enemy—a rival king in a distant land, who was not nearly as wealthy or wise, but coveted the domain of the king. This rival king was as evil as the king was good. He planned by craft and cunning to steal the king's treasure. He knew that without his treasure, the king would be so hurt and demoralized that he would be unable to rule his kingdom well and would fall as easy prey to the armies of the wicked king. So, the wicked king sent one of his evil servants, posing as a jewel merchant, to gain access to the king's palace and learn the location of the treasure. Through a plan of trickery and deception, he was able to steal the treasure and make his escape. The theft was not detected until that night. When the king and his son went up to the tower room, the jewels were gone!

The king was heart sick. "Son, what will we do?"

The son, who by now was a man, replied, "Don't worry Father, we will find them and get them back."

Royal messengers were sent out to all parts of the kingdom. "The royal jewels are missing. A fabulous reward is offered for their return."

One of the king's servants remembered the visit of the jewel merchant the day the treasure disappeared and on further investigation, discovered that he was an imposter. About that time a traveler arrived from the land of the evil king and told the tale of this evil king boasting how he had stolen the good king's treasure

That evening the king and his son had a conference to plan what to do. The king said, "Son, the only way for us to get the jewels back is to send an army to capture them. I am too old or I would lead the army myself, but I fear to send you, son, for if I should lose you and the gems, I surely would die."

"Father," said his son, "I know how much you love them, and I love them too. I must go. If I don't go, we will not get them back, but if I do, perhaps both I and the gems will come home. I must try." The

son pleaded with his father to let him go and finally the father, seeing it was the only way, let him go.

With tears in both father's and son's eyes, the son set off in the morning, neither knowing if they should ever see each other again. The banners were flying, the trumpets sounding as the army marched off. The young prince in the lead on the king's white stallion. But although the scene appeared joyful, there was a sadness and heaviness that hung in the air.

Months went by with no news. The king tried hard to rule his people well as he had always done, but things were falling into disarray. He could not make decisions; he could not think clearly. His mind was elsewhere, in a distant land where his two most precious treasures were. He tried to give his attention to his people, but more and more he spent his time in the tower room, staring at the black velvet table. His heart was breaking with grief.

Then one day, the trumpets sounded. Watchmen shouted, "Open the gates! Open the gates!"

The people cried, "The Prince has returned! The Prince has returned."

The king's heart leaped within him. Could it be? He flew down the stairs and out into the courtyard. Yes, it was true! Here were the soldiers, but where was his son? One of the captains motioned the king to come over to a wagon. In it lay the king's son, grievously wounded.

"Father, I got them. Here - your treasure," his son whispered.

The captain said, "He wouldn't let anyone else carry them. He said he had to return them himself."

The king took the bag from his son's hand and as soon as he had done so, the prince's head fell to one side.

"Is he dead?" asked the king, terror rising in his heart.

"No, not yet," said the captain, "but he is very close. He just fainted."

"Call for the royal physician! Make ready way for the Prince!" The captain shouted.

The prince was carried to his room and attended by the royal physician. The doctor came out after examining him, shaking his head.

"Will he live?" inquired the king.

"I don't know," replied the physician slowly. "He sustained a very severe wound. Ordinarily, I would have called it a mortal wound, but he has managed to stay alive this long. Perhaps there is hope. I have done all I can. It will depend on his will to live."

Days went on, the prince hovering between death and life. Then one day the king remembered the treasure . He had been so concerned with his son; he had forgotten about it. The prince had been willing to die to recover the gems; perhaps he would be willing to live to enjoy them the king reasoned. So, he had the black velveteen table moved to the prince's bedside, and each night the king would spread out the gems and examine each one. "Oh, this one is so precious. This one is so beautiful." Just as he and the prince had done together before their theft. The prince started to open his eyes during this time. And as the days went on, he responded more and more each time his father took the gems out. One day, the prince was strong enough to sit up and he held out his hand to take one. Holding it up to the light he said, "Father, it would have been worth it for just one gem, but for so many - it would have been worth it many times over. Father, I'm so glad I was able to bring this joy to your heart and in looking at these gems, there is joy in my heart as well." From that day on, the prince's rate of recovery increased until he was completely well again.

The king is again a wealthy and wise king beloved of his people. And each evening as before, the king and his son can be found in the tower examining, admiring, and loving their own special treasure, their gems. And the evil king? The prince was sorely wounded in the battle, but the evil king, all his army and his servants, were completely destroyed.

Malachi 3:17 (K.J.V.)

Ex. 19:5

Deut. 14:2

Ps. 135:4

Heb. 12:2