

I Love to Tell the Story!

One night during the Easter season in March of 1989, our children couldn't sleep; two were frightened about those things that go "bump in the night," one didn't want to go to sleep and the oldest was returning from the Astro-World youth activity. It was Spring break, no school the next day, so I decided to read to them. I made two stipulations; first, they had to be lying down (they were multi-leveled from the top bunk to the floor) and secondly, I was going to read the Bible. May the Lord forgive my underestimating the kids' readiness for the Word! There were no arguments to hear from Suess, Disney, Ingalls Wilder or E.B. White. I thought to myself, "I'll test their resilience and put them to sleep reading four chapters from Ezekiel." Can you believe it? They were still awake after those four chapters! Then I explained to the kids it was Passion week and this was Maundy Thursday, the night when Jesus had His last supper with His disciples. I went on, "We are now approaching the trial and crucifixion of Friday, looking forward to His glorious resurrection on Sunday morning." I continued, "Kids, what do you say I read the story from the Gospels?" I saw heads lean forward over the bunk rails, an ascended head resurrect from the pillow on the carpet and they listened as though they had never heard it before. I tried to read it from the old King James as though it were the first time I had poured over this dramatic account. The room was quiet, except for the classical music playing softly in the background. The room was enchantingly bright with a raised blind that allowed us to see the "purpled" night outside. Broadway could not have given us a better atmosphere.

I began to read, "*When the morning was come, all the chief and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death: And when they had bound Him they led Him away, and delivered Him to Pontius Pilate the Governor.*" I read slowly, reverently, deliberately, trying to be obedient to the grammatical punctuations. I was aware that the kids knew the story almost as well as myself, yet I didn't hear a peep. As I read, everything we saw became a visual aid and every thought in our minds provided full-colored illustrations. Our white cat came prowling in, reminding us that because of Christ's blood shed for us, our sins have been washed as white as snow. The darkness of the outside reminded us of that dark night Jesus prayed in Gethsemane while men plotted His death. The previous fears in our children's hearts had peacefully subsided in the presence of our main character in this drama, the Prince of Peace, who came to release us from the bondage of our fears.

As I came to the crucifixion, a lump began to rise in my throat and moisture spontaneously came to the corners of my eyes. I wanted to look and see how the children were responding, but I felt a restraint at this sacred moment. It was as though the Lord was saying this is not just a time for kids and Daddy – this is a time for God and His children. I was reminded of what we had previously read in Ezekiel, "*I am their inheritance...I am their possession*" (Ezekiel 44:28).

Before we could finish the last days in all four Gospels, the kids were asleep "in the arms of Jesus." I carried the ones not in their beds to their own rooms and then in the stillness of this night I found myself praying, "Lord, carry my very sick loved ones to bed. Be with them, take away the fears, make Yourself real to us and them."

Perhaps Catherine Hankey said it best, "I love to tell the story, for those who know it best seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest; and when in scenes of glory I sing the new, new song, 'twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long."

I love you. Celebrate Him this Easter, because on the first Easter, He celebrated you!

- Pastor Pope -

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