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A Whole Loaf, Please

Arthur S. Maxwell

In the hard days after the Russian Revolution, many people suffered. Thousands starved. Thousands more, who had once had everything they could wish for, found themselves begging. It was especially hard for the children, because the change had come so suddenly. I think many of them must have cried their eyes out.

I know of one family that had a very hard time. Father had been killed and mother had died, and Grandma was left with three children. They had once lived in a beautiful home, with a table always spread with good things. Now they lived in a hovel. Grandma worked hard all day to earn enough to keep the children alive, but even when the work was done, there was so little food to be had in exchange for it.

One day the last morsel was eaten. After a crust each at midday, there was not a crumb left in the house. Grandma was very sad, but she tried not to let the children see how worried she was. She called them around her, told them what was wrong, and they knelt down to pray. She felt they had come to the end of everything they could do themselves.

What a prayer meeting that was! Just Grandma and three children, praying the way only hungry people can.



I don’t know what they all said, but the little girl prayed something like this:

“Dear Jesus, please send us something for supper. Not just a crust, but a whole loaf, please.”

They hadn’t seen a whole loaf in a very long time. It was like asking for a birthday cake for an ordinary meal.

Suppertime came, and still there was no food.

“You haven’t sharpened the bread knife yet,” the little girl said to Grandma, still certain her prayer would be answered.

So Grandma sharpened the knife, as is the Russian custom.

The evening passed. Night came on. Cold and hungry, the children were about to go to bed when there was a knock at the door.

A man stood outside, covered in snow. He had tramped nearly twenty miles that day. Grandma recognized him as an old friend of the family and welcomed him in.

“What brings you here tonight?” she asked.

“About noon today, I had a feeling you were in great need, and that I must come at once.”

Then he turned to the children. “And you’ll never guess what I’ve brought.”

“I can,” said the little girl.

“What is it, then?”

“A whole big loaf.”

“That’s exactly what it is!” said their friend, opening his overcoat and pulling one out. “But how did you know?”

So they told him how they had prayed, not for a crust, but for a whole loaf. Together they knelt and thanked God for caring for them.

It was only bread, with no butter on it. But what a wonderful supper it was!

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