

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor.”

– Psalm 41:1

Quarrel at the Ritter Place

Part 1

“Daddy, you must help me think of something!” cried Randy the minute he opened the door of the woodworking shop.

“What are you talking about?” asked Daddy, looking up from the board he was sanding.

Randy took the push broom from its place on the wall. He began to sweep up the sawdust and shavings around Daddy’s workbench. That was his first job after school. As he worked, he talked.

“We had a missionary at school today. He came from Haiti. He showed us Haiti on the map. He told us about the country and about the people. He told us how poor they are and what kind of houses they live in and what

they eat and what they do for a living.

“Then he told about the children’s home where they take care of children who have no fathers or mothers. We all felt so sorry for them.

“After he left, we talked about how we might help them. We decided the children’s home would be our Thanksgiving **project** this year.”

“What are you going to do?” asked Daddy.

“Well, we had a lot of ideas, but none of them were very good. I guess we don’t know much about how those poor children live and what they would really need.

“So Miss Wine said it might be best to send money to the missionary. Then he could buy something he knows would make the poor children happy.”

“Where are you going to get money?” Daddy asked next.

“That’s why I need you to help me,” said Randy.

“Between now and Thanksgiving we all are going to make as much money as we can. On the first day after Thanksgiving vacation, we will bring the money we made and tell how we made it. Then Miss Wine will send it to the missionary.

“Our parents can’t just give us money to bring. We children are supposed to make the money ourselves.”

“I’ll have to think about that,” said Daddy. “There isn’t a whole lot of time between now and Thanksgiving. And third graders are hardly big enough to go out and

get jobs.”

“I know,” put in Randy. “That’s what we told Miss Wine. She said our parents can help us all they want to. They just aren’t supposed to give us money to bring. We have to help make the money.”

“Do you have any ideas?” asked Daddy.

“Not really. I thought you could help me make something here in the shop. It would have to be something I could sell. But I don’t know what it could be.”

“Well, let’s think about it for a day or so. We will come up with something,” said Daddy.

Randy finished sweeping and went into the house. As he walked in, he heard his mother say, “Oh, here he is now. I’ll ask him.”

Mother turned from the phone and said, “Phil wonders if you can meet him at the Ritter place in about ten minutes.”

“Sure,” answered Randy, “if it is all right with you.”

Mother turned back to the phone. “Yes, Phil. He can come for a while. He will be there in about ten minutes.” Then she hung up.

“You and Phil should have been brothers instead of cousins,” she said with a laugh. “You never get tired of being together, and you have never had a quarrel that I know of.”

“Well, I don’t have a brother, and his brother is a baby, so we need each other.” Randy went out the door

and up the back lane toward the woods.

The woods stood halfway between the two farms. The boys' fathers owned it. As long as Randy and Phil could remember, an old house had stood in a little open space in the trees. Their fathers had let a poor family live there without paying rent.

But that summer the house had burned down. The Ritters had to find another place to live.

Since then, the boys often played in the woods near what was left of the burned-down house. They often met there to talk.

Today when they both got there, the boys sat on the stone wall and talked about the Ritters.

"Do you think the Ritters were as poor as the people in Haiti?" asked Phil.

"Oh, no, not nearly as poor," said Randy. "The Ritters had a pig and a cow and hens. Most people in Haiti aren't that rich."

"But the pig died and the cow got sick and they couldn't milk her," answered Phil. "And a fox got their hens."

"No wonder. They shouldn't have let them run loose," said Randy. "They should have fixed up the old henhouse and kept them penned up."

"They likely didn't have enough money to fix up the henhouse or to buy chicken feed. That's why they let the hens run loose."

“Well, our dads let them live here free, and they had a garden. Mother said Mrs. Ritter had a good garden started. Most people in Haiti don’t have a big garden like the Ritters did.”

“I guess you are right. But look at that garden now. It is one big weed patch,” said Phil. “But what I really want to talk about is our Thanksgiving project. Do you have any good ideas about how we could make some money?”

“Not really. I told Daddy about it a while ago. We want a project we can make in the shop.”

“Where would you sell it?” asked Phil.

“I don’t know. Maybe at the Jamesburg Market. I heard some of the girls talking about making cookies to sell there.”

“I just wish it were spring,” said Phil. “Then we could raise popcorn or watermelons or something like that to sell. But here it is fall already. It is going to be hard to think of something to do that will bring in any money.”

Just then, far across the field they heard the *dong, dong* of a bell.

“That’s for me,” said Randy, hopping off the wall. “See you tomorrow. Think of something for us to do if you can.”

After school the next day, Randy went to the shop. The first thing he said was, “Daddy, have you thought of something I can do to make money?”

“No, I haven’t,” said Daddy. “I did think of some things, but I don’t know where you could sell them.”

Randy took down the push broom and began to work. “I thought I could make birdhouses. But no one would buy birdhouses this time of the year.

“And I thought about bird feeders. But one of the other boys said his father was going to help him make bird feeders to sell at the Jamesburg Market. So I can’t make bird feeders. That was before Miss Wine said we’d better not be telling each other what we planned to do.

“She said if one of us had a good idea, a lot of others might want to do the same thing, and that would not be fair.

“And she also said two of us might think of the same thing, but if we didn’t know the other was doing it, that would be all right.”

Daddy laughed. “Do you think you and Phil can keep from telling each other what you are doing?”

“Oh, sure,” said Randy. “I just wish I knew of something to do.”

“Maybe we need to ask the Lord to help us think of something,” said Daddy.

“Yes, let’s do that every day from now on. I want to get to work on whatever I’m going to do. Maybe God will give us some good ideas since we are making money for poor people.”

So every day Mother and Daddy and Randy prayed

for a good idea. They prayed for something they could do to make money for the poor children in Haiti.

The week went by. The next week went by. Mother and Daddy and Randy had talked over many plans for making money. But none of them seemed like a very good idea.

On Friday, Randy came home from school almost in tears. "Mother, what are we going to do? All the other children are working on their projects but Phil and me."

"How do you know that?" asked Mother. "I thought you weren't to talk about your projects."

"Oh, they don't talk about it. But they smile and nod their heads at each other and roll their eyes around at Phil and me. That means they know what they are going to do. And they know Phil and I don't have anything yet."

"Let's not worry about it," said Mother. "We are asking God to help us. So I believe He will give us an idea in plenty of time before Thanksgiving."

"But we have prayed for two weeks. And Phil said they are praying too."

"How about making something that we could sell at Jamesburg Market?"

"Well, the girls were talking about selling cookies there. And one boy is making bird feeders," said Randy.

"That leaves a lot of things we could make," said

Mother. "Cakes and pies and bread and ice cream and candy."

"I couldn't help much with that kind of stuff, could I?"

"Oh, yes. I could give you plenty to do," said Mother.

On Saturday morning Phil called Randy on the phone. When Randy hung up, he said, "We have a plan, Mother. Phil wants me to meet him at the Ritter place right after lunch today. He is going to tell me everything they talked about at their house. I am going to tell him all we talked about doing. He thinks maybe we can get an idea from each other. But of course, we wouldn't tell if we got a good idea from the other one."

"That might work," said Mother.

After lunch, Randy headed for the woods. He was gone a long time. When he came into the house, he wore a big smile on his face.

"Mother," he called in an excited voice. "Now I know what we can do to make Thanksgiving money!"

"That's wonderful," said Mother. "So you did get an idea from Phil?"

"No. He didn't come. I waited and waited."

Then Mother said, "Now I remember that Aunt Betty told me they were going to the city this afternoon. Then they were going on to their grandmother's for the weekend. Maybe they had a late lunch and there wasn't time for Phil to come to the woods. It would have been nice if he had called and told you he couldn't come."

Then you wouldn't have gone up there for nothing."

"I don't care, Mother!" cried Randy. "It wasn't for nothing! While I was waiting, I walked around the old burned-down house. And guess what I found back in the Ritters' old weedy garden? Now I know what my Thanksgiving project can be!"

–Ruth K. Hobbs

“But grievous words stir up anger.”

– Proverbs 15:1

Quarrel at the Ritter Place

Part 2

“I could never guess,” said Mother. “What did you find in Ritters’ old garden?”

“There’s a pumpkin back there in the weeds. I think it would make a lot of pies. Couldn’t we make pumpkin pies to sell at Jamesburg Market?”

“Indeed, we could,” said Mother. “I’ve got a good recipe. Pumpkin pies should sell well just before Thanksgiving. See, the Lord answered our prayers in plenty of time.”

“Yes, I thought of that,” said Randy. “And I thanked Him and thanked Him on the way home.”

“Now, let’s do a little planning,” said Mother. “The pumpkin is likely good and ripe this time of the year.

Do you think you can get your wagon back there and bring it home?"

"I'll get it home somehow," said Randy. "Leave that part up to me."

"All right. Next Saturday you can bring it home. We will cook it and make filling. Then we will freeze it. Monday afternoon before Thanksgiving we can make the pies. We can sell them on Tuesday and Wednesday."

"Oh, I am so happy!" cried Randy. "Now I can smile and nod my head like the others."

Then Randy stopped smiling. "Oh, Mother, what about Phil? Now he's the only one without a project."

"Let's not worry about that," said Mother. "The Lord can find him something to do too. Don't be surprised if he comes home from his grandmother's with a better idea than yours."

Sure enough, on Monday morning Phil met Randy at the door of the schoolhouse. He was nodding and had a big grin on his face.

Randy broke into a happy laugh and nodded too.

Randy could hardly wait till Saturday. He could hardly wait to get the pumpkin home and show it to Mother.

Pulling his wagon through the woods was no fun. It was harder yet to yank it through the weeds that **encircled** the Ritters' burned-down house. Little by little he jerked it along the wall and back to the garden.

Then he stopped dead still. He could not believe what he saw through the tall weeds. But he had to believe it, for there was Phil in the garden. He was going the other way pulling a wagon. In the wagon was the pumpkin—Randy’s pumpkin.

Randy dropped the handle of his wagon. “Phil!” he yelled. He went tearing through the weeds until he got to his cousin.

“Where are you going with my pumpkin?”

Phil turned around. Then he just stood there. Amazement was written all over his face.

“*Your* pumpkin?” he said. “What do you mean? This is *my* pumpkin.”

“It is not!” cried Randy hotly. “I found it last week. It’s for my Thanksgiving project. Mother and I are going to make pies to sell at the market.”

“Not with this pumpkin!” said Phil. “This is mine. I found it last Saturday. And it’s for *my* Thanksgiving project. Mama and I are going to make pumpkin bread to sell at the market.”

“No, you’re not!” cried Randy. “I saw this pumpkin first. You weren’t even back here last Saturday.”

“I was so! I came when I said. I was here before lunch, but you didn’t come. I waited and waited. And while I was waiting, I walked back here and found this pumpkin.”

“You did *not* say come before lunch. You said come

after lunch. And that's when I came. But you didn't come. That's when I found the pumpkin," cried Randy.

"I know good and well I never said *after* lunch," cried Phil. "We were going to the city and to Grandmother's after lunch. I couldn't even have come after lunch.

"And I saw this pumpkin *before* lunch, so I saw it first. That makes it mine." Phil turned away, pulling the wagon.

Randy was too angry to say another word. But he wasn't going to let Phil walk off with his whole Thanksgiving project.

He made a dash for the wagon. He put his arms around the pumpkin and tried to lift it off. It was so heavy he could hardly manage it and too huge to encircle completely.

He got it part way up. Then Phil looked back. "You leave my pumpkin alone!" he cried, giving the wagon a quick jerk. The wagon went out from under the pumpkin.

The pumpkin slipped out of Randy's arms. It hit the ground with a **thud** and split wide open!

Now Phil was the one who was angry. "Look what you did!" he cried, almost in tears. "I'm going to tell Mama on you! You've ruined my project!"

"You mean *you* ruined *my* project, and I don't care!" shouted Randy. "It was your fault. You jerked the wagon. I'm going to tell Mother on you too."

Both boys stood looking at the split pumpkin. Then Phil said, "Well, I'm taking the biggest piece. You can have the rest for your old pies."



He picked up the biggest piece and put it on his wagon. Without looking back he started for home.

Slowly Randy went back to his wagon. He pulled it to where the split pumpkin lay in the weeds and started to pick up the pieces.

All the fun had gone out of the Thanksgiving project. Tears began to run down his face.

By the time Randy got the wagon out of the woods, his tears were gone. He began to think about what Mother might say. He wished now he had not gotten so angry with Phil. He knew now that Phil really had seen the pumpkin first.

"But that didn't make it his," Randy said to himself. "Daddy owns the Ritter place just as much as Phil's dad does."

By the time Randy got to the house he was cross

all over again. The minute he walked in, Mother knew something was wrong. “What happened?” she asked.

Randy began to talk fast. “It’s Phil. He took my pumpkin. He would have taken the whole thing if it hadn’t split apart. But it was his fault. He jerked the wagon. And now I don’t know if there is enough for our pies or not! Phil took most of it.”

“Randy!” cried Mother. “What in the world are you talking about? You’d better slow down and start at the beginning.”

So Randy slowed down and started at the beginning.

When he finished, Mother said, “I must call Aunt Betty and get Phil’s side of this story. I can’t believe you and Phil quarreled over a pumpkin. You could have cut it in half.”

Mother went to the kitchen to call Aunt Betty. They talked for a long time. Randy could not hear what Mother said, but he could hear her laughing. He couldn’t see what was so funny.

At last she came out. But all she said was, “Let’s go and look at your pumpkin.”

When she saw the broken pieces, she laughed. “Why, Randy, there is plenty of pumpkin here. We couldn’t have used the whole thing anyhow. Now wasn’t it silly to fight over it?”

Randy said nothing. By now he could see how silly it had been. He had enough pumpkin for his Thanksgiving

project. So did Phil. So what was the quarrel all about?

Then Mother said, "You and Phil will have to patch up your quarrel. Right now would be the easiest time. But first I want to ask you some questions.

"Who said the first angry words over this pumpkin?"

Randy thought a little. "I guess I did. But, Mother, he was taking my pumpkin."

"Did Phil know it was your pumpkin?"

"Well, no. I guess he didn't when he first took it."

"Who had seen the pumpkin first?"

"Phil did. But I didn't know he had."

"After you knew Phil had seen the pumpkin first, what did you do?"

Randy didn't answer. Every question Mother asked showed him the whole quarrel had been pretty much his own fault.

He wished he had not gotten angry. He wished he had not yelled at Phil. He wished he had not tried to take the pumpkin. Most of all, he wished he and Phil were not mad at each other. But what could he do about it now?

"Wouldn't you like to run over to Aunt Betty's and tell Phil you are sorry?" asked Mother.

"I guess so. But I don't think it was all my fault," said Randy.

"I know that," said Mother. "You don't need to take the blame for everything. Just tell him you are sorry for what you did."

“All right, I will.”

As soon as Randy said that, he began to feel happy. He began to run up the back lane toward the woods. When he got there he had to slow down and catch his breath.

He walked through the woods thinking about what he would say to Phil. He was almost at the Ritter place when he looked up.

And there, coming toward him was Phil.

–Ruth K. Hobbs