

The Man Who Made a Loan to God

On the country of Greece a long, long time ago when Christianity struggled against paganism, a certain man, supporter of the Greek pagan faith, took unto himself a Christian wife. Even though they loved each other dearly the woman couldn't convert him to Christianity. Only one thing, however, gained his sympathy. Previously, when a poor person approached him for alms he would never give anything to anyone. Then the wife began to tell him that it was his duty to help the poor.

"Why should I give anything?" asked the man.

"Because God has told us to. He who gives to the poor is making a loan to God, and God in time of need will repay him tenfold."

"Tenfold," thought the man to himself. "That's real good interest." And so from that time on he began to give alms to all the poor, but he always reminded his wife, "Take care. I'm making your God a loan. I'll see if he will repay me when I'm in need."

Thus several years passed by and during this time the man became so impoverished that things couldn't be any worse for him.

"Well my dear wife," he said one day, "now is the time to exact payment for that debt from God. But where should I look for Him?"

"Go to church and there you will find Him," his wife told him.

So the man went to church, but didn't find anyone there. Looking all around him he happened to notice a small coin—a five-cent piece—on the floor. Picking up the coin he said to himself, "Oh what a stingy debtor the Christian God is! But maybe this is only a token. At all events, I'll take whatever he offers." And having returned home he began to complain to his wife.

“What did you tell me about your God! You know how much charity I have given and this is how He has repaid me!” And he showed her the five-cent piece that he had found in the church.

“Well, thank God for that!” answered his wife. “Take this five-cent piece and go to the marketplace and buy some fish, so we’ll have something to eat.” The man went off and bought a nice fish and gave it to his wife. She cut it open, cleaned it and found inside a precious stone.

“See husband what I have found in the fish! Take this stone and show it to the merchant. Maybe you’ll get something more than this five cents.” So the man took the stone and brought it to the rich merchant who lived in that town.

“Will you please look at this, sir,” he said. “I found the stone inside a fish. Examine it and tell me how much it might be worth.” The merchant studied the stone and his eyes lit up. “Oh, man,” he said, “this stone is worth a very large sum of money. If I were to give you all my possessions that would be too little. But if you wish to sell it to me I’ll give you enough money to last you for the rest of your life.”

The man, of course, was delighted to agree to this proposal. He set out to tell his wife about the good fortune that had befallen him. But on the way he began to think about this strange turn of events, and fear overtook him. “It is certainly evident that the Christian God gave me this good fortune,” he said to himself. “That means that He is both powerful and good. And I so often laughed at Him and complained to my wife that she believes in superstitions and that she bows down to a criminal crucified on a cross.”

And so, thinking to himself, the man resolved to convert to the faith of his wife. In due time he did so and from the money the merchant gave him for the precious stone found in the fish, he decided not to take anything for his own benefit but to turn over everything all at once for

helping the poor. And often afterwards, thinking about his own miraculous conversion, he used to say, “God has thousands of ways to knock at the human heart and open it up to goodness and kindness. To one person He will open the heart with a stroke of grief and misfortune and to another, with an unexpected and undeserved kindness.”