

The Water Bearer

It was one of the hottest days of the dry season. We had not seen rain in almost a month. The crops were dying. Cows had stopped giving milk. The creeks and streams were long gone back into the earth. It was a dry season that would bankrupt several farmers before it was through. Every day, my husband and his brothers would go about the arduous process of trying to get water to the fields. Lately this process had involved taking a truck to the local water rendering plant and filling it up with water. But severe rationing had cut everyone off. If we didn't see some rain soon, we would lose everything. It was on this day that I learned the true lesson of sharing and witnessed the only miracle I have seen with my own eyes. I was in the kitchen making lunch for my husband and his brothers when I saw my six-year old son, Billy, walking toward the woods. He wasn't walking with the usual carefree abandon of a youth, but with a serious purpose. I could only see his back. He was obviously walking with a great effort...trying to be as still as possible.

Minutes after he disappeared into the woods, he came running out again, toward the house. I went back to making sandwiches; thinking that whatever task he had been doing was completed. Moments later, however, he was once again walking in that slow purposeful stride toward the woods.

This activity went on for an hour: walk carefully to the woods, run back to the house. Finally I couldn't take it any longer and I crept out of the house and followed him on his journey (being very careful not to be seen...as he was obviously doing important work and didn't need his Mommy checking up on him). He was cupping both hands in front of him as he walked; being very careful not to spill the water he held in them...maybe two or three tablespoons were held in his tiny hands. I sneaked close as he went into the woods. Branches and thorns slapped his little face but he did not try to avoid them. He had a much higher purpose.

As I leaned in to spy on him, I saw the most amazing site. Several large deer loomed in front of him. Billy walked right up to them. I almost screamed for him to get away.

A huge buck with elaborate antlers was dangerously close. But the buck did not threaten him...he didn't even move as Billy knelt down. And I saw a tiny fawn laying on the ground, obviously suffering from dehydration and heat exhaustion, lift its head with great effort to lap up the water cupped in my boy's hand. When the water was gone, Billy jumped up to run back to the house and I hid behind a tree.

I followed him back to the house, to a spigot that we had shut off the water to. Billy opened it all the way up and a small trickle began to creep out.

He knelt there, letting the drip, drip slowly fill up his makeshift "cup," as the sun beat down on his little back.

And it came clear to me: The trouble he had gotten into for playing with the hose the week before. The lecture he had received about the importance of not wasting water. The reason he didn't ask me to help him.

It took almost twenty minutes for the drops to fill his hands. When he stood up and began the trek back, I was there in front of him. His little eyes just filled with tears. "I'm not wasting," was all he said.

As he began his walk, I joined him...with a small pot of water from the kitchen. I let him tend to the fawn. I stayed away. It was his job.

I stood on the edge of the woods watching the most beautiful heart I have ever known working so hard to save another life.

As the tears that rolled down my face began to hit the ground, they were suddenly joined by other drops...and more drops... and more. I looked up at the sky. It was as if God, himself, was weeping with pride.

Some will probably say that this was all just a huge coincidence, that miracles don't really exist, that it was bound to rain sometime. And I can't argue with that...I'm not going to try. All I can say is that the rain that came that day saved our farm...just like the actions of one little boy saved another life.