

Owning Tabitha's Place

Rain falls softly upon our village... the birds chirp soggily in the trees of Sus... Sus, chosen by the Creator of the Universe... chosen to plant a spark of life in your soil... Sus... How were you so blessed?

It seemed so hopeless that this Little Flock would find a place to live in Europe. Months of waiting and wandering had produced not one lead, not one convert. Then the proud, aristocratic woman opened her hotel and her heart to this ragged bunch of travellers... the first crack of compassion in the stony heart of Europe. Upon this one act, our Father was able to build. She was the one... Teresa... the one our Father's angels could work through.

"Go visit my son in France... He will take you to my "castle". It is in bad shape, they say... and the neighbors in the village are strange, hard to bear. They surely would have a hard time if you lived in my house. You can stay there if you want to and IF my son, Jean-Pierre wants you to...!"

Jean-Pierre, driving his fast, French car along the curvy French countryside roads... He doesn't say much. He is kind to us. He seems to recognize somewhere deep down in his unbelieving, skeptical heart that we are different, special. Elbert and I (and little Hephzibah) somehow won his trust during our short stay with him. Jean-Pierre is a young man full of dreams, very unrealistic dreams. His elite French upbringing, and the untimely death of his father (leaving the family in a place where they, for the first time, needed to be restrained by the slight concern as to whether they would have money to support their customary lifestyle), left Jean-Pierre subdued, quenched by the fact that he could no longer do EVERYTHING that entered his imagination. He had spuriously bought a hotel on a touristic village in the Pyrenees, without realizing the daily drudgery involved in maintaining such a place... He dreamed of yachts, sailing the open seas, all around the world. But reality now was that the inheritance money was almost gone, it costs too much to hire people to run the hotel, so he must do the work himself; his mother's prosperous hotel in Spain is no longer so prosperous so she has more difficulty bailing him out of his financial blunders; he wants a faster car but can't afford to get one, AND THE FAMILY STILL HAS THEIR "CASTLE" which won't sell and which has been standing empty for five years and is deteriorating quickly.

And today, Jean-Pierre drives with a couple of near strangers toward the little village of Sus. His mother has offered the big house to us free of charge. He hasn't said "yes" or "no". He hasn't said much. He is thoughtful.

He unlocks the big gates... "Oh, it is so big! SO BIG!" It seems almost like a dream as we walk through the dark, cold, empty house strewn with clothes, papers, boxes, and books... Children had broken into the house — not hardened vandals, for it was not maliciously damaged, but only in disarray... When Teresa and her family had moved out after the death of her husband, they had left many of their personal belongings behind, and some miscellaneous pieces of furniture... and one beautiful chalice sat amidst the rubble, overturned on the mantle of the fireplace... this chalice caught the eye of both Elbert and me; we looked at each other and smiled...

Jean-Pierre was obviously disturbed at the sight of this mess. The house was so quickly running down. His countenance grew even more sober. From one room to another we walked slowly together with him... Up the dark staircase... I could hardly restrain myself from expressing how beautiful and wonderful it all looked to me beneath the superficial rubble... but Elbert had let me know clearly that I needed to be quiet and let our host lead the way...

"Oh, another bathroom? That makes eight. Or was it nine? And so many fireplaces! So much land... and a river right at the edge of the property..." I could hardly cover my awe.

No wonder they had been asking such a high price for this place. It is surely worth \$250,000. But it had just been empty for years because no one wanted to buy it. Why? And now here we were — a people without money; and Theresa had said that we could use the house for five years rent-free, before they would try again to sell it. But what would Jean-Pierre say??

This would be the perfect place for us to get established in. Surely we could never afford to buy such a

place as this but at least we could get a start here, and find another place before the five years were up. Our tour of the house was finished.

“Do you like the place?” asked Jean-Pierre calmly.

“Yes,” answered Elbert.

“If it isn’t in too bad a shape for you, you can have it.”

My ears could hardly communicate clearly to my brain what was being said at that moment because my emotions were all stirred up, and my will was working so hard to control them (at least outwardly)...

“We will call our friends right away. They will be here in a couple of days.”

And so the bird had found a nest in which to lay her young... The little flock of sheep had a fold...

And they surely began to flourish like a tree that was planted by the water. They brought forth fruit very quickly, for their season had come...

...And nearly two years passed. The flock doubled in size in the green pastures of Tabitha’s Place.

...Then came the bad news. Theresa’s financial situation became critical. Her verbal agreement with us about five years rent-free became impossible for her to keep.

“We must sell the house this year. We have no alternative... We need the CASH right away!”

We started looking for another place, another house. But we had no money to buy another place even if one could be found. We hadn’t even enough to rent a place, for our little bakery provided only enough to sustain itself, and provide for pressing needs... We still had no industry. And, anyway, there were no houses available... no open doors.

“Well, get out the tents again. Maybe we can camp until something else opens up... We’ve done it once, we can do it again... But, oh, this time there are so many babies — that will make it much harder.”

Theresa feels bad about it all. She has a group of lawyers who will buy it at the end of the year. But she really would like it if we would buy it. She says she would take one million francs, that is 100,000 dollars...

THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE!

But all things are possible for our God... A word of wisdom comes forth from the Body. “We have the money to buy the house already. The money is within the church! Each person shall ask their earthly families for any money that is due them... Old insurance policies, money that was put aside for them, money the parents wanted to freely give to help their children buy their house... AND, express your need to your brothers across the seas!”

WISDOM, the wisdom from above is first of all pure and then peaceable... Peace came to us all...

Our brothers took on our burden. They went to war! The victory of our Messiah shined throughout the universe... “No greater love has any man than that he would lay down his life for his friends...”

The church in America said “YES.” So, with confidence, we picked up the phone and said, “Theresa, WE WILL buy your house!”

And when the church says, “I WILL,” it will be done!

We began hearing stories of the selfless life the warriors were leading as they worked for us in Boston.

We heard of the great strain it had put upon all the households in Island Pond, and about the abundant grace that was given to them all during this time of hardship. We heard stories like the one about Jesse Ryland who refused to spend his long-saved money to buy something that he really needed because he wanted to send his money to the church in Sus to buy their house to buy their house for them. We praised our Father and shed many tears...

The money from families and kindhearted friends came in. It was surprisingly much, since none of the brothers and sisters thought they had anything... It was almost \$30,000. The end of the year was drawing near. Would our “yes” be “yes”?

We found out that we would also need to pay a \$10,000 real estate tax at the time of purchase. Oh, we didn’t count on that...

Miraculously the church in America and Canada came up with 50,000 dollars from their hard labor and sacrifice... Now we had \$80,000 and the year’s end was at hand. Theresa said she would take it, and give us more time to pay the remaining \$30,000...

At this time the American dollar was at its highest point. Our Father blessed the work of our brothers. Later it went down, making it harder to pay the remaining 300,000 franks... But on March 13, 1986, Phineas was able to carry the remaining payment and put it in the hand of the real estate agent.

It had been very, very, hard, but our brothers had been faithful to do what they promised. What seemed IMPOSSIBLE became REALITY. For our God is Great, and worthy of our praise.

On March 13 we all lifted up our hands in praise and thanksgiving to our Father, for our brothers and sisters who loved us and cared for our need. This was a COMPLETED DEED, which is recorded in heaven!

The Work in Europe now has a firm foothold which will not be shaken.....