

## A True Craftsman

*[Zed is a stone mason working in his home town in the Judean hills. He is helped a few days a week by a semi-retired mason, Ben, who has arrived on this first day of the week, with some interesting news about a Sabbath incident involving Jesus.]*

*Wish I'd been there!* Zed commented, not taking his eyes for a moment from the marble plinth that he was edging. His concentration made him unaware of Rebecca, his wife who had come in from the market with a basket of fruit and vegetables. She would say he hardly noticed her even when he was not working. *No you wouldn't,* she laughed as she went indoors. *Isaac's house is the last place on earth you'd want to be. In any case, you're the last person he would invite!*

*That's true,* Ben confirmed. *You and Isaac have never seen eye to eye.* Zed put down his tools, wiped his brow and sat down on a pile of stone in the corner of his work yard. *That's true. I've no time for him or his lot - swindlers and hypocrites most of them. But Becca's wrong this time,* he grinned at his old friend. *It really is one time I would have loved to have been there. Just to see the look on Isaac's face. That arrogant young Pharisee needs putting down, though it's a brave man who does it.*

*Apparently, Jesus doesn't seem to see it like that.* Ben pulled a wooden stool across the yard to sit opposite his friend, before he continued. *Jesus took on Isaac and his lot, he said, and they were so surprised and embarrassed they were stunned into silence. That's what they're saying in town this morning. Isaac stunned! Isaac speechless!* Zed laughed again. *Why, that man never stops mouthing off. He thinks money gives him the right to talk big. Isaac speechless! Now, that's' what I missed. That's why I wish I'd been there.*

*Perhaps you don't really know the man after all.* Ben spoke seriously now. *Isaac's like a lot of his sort, he said. They roar like a lion when they're backed by their own, but then they're silent as mice when they're on their own and face to face with the opposition.* Ben stopped to let Zed register his meaning, and then resumed his story.

*Our Miriam was in the kitchen there yesterday and she told me what she heard. So Isaac was happy for her to work on the Sabbath! Zed could not resist butting in.*

*Ben ignored his comment and continued. They tell me the whole evening turned upside down for Isaac. He'd invited old Aaron, not because he wanted him to share his supper but because of his dropsy. He thought if he faced Jesus with someone really sick, the teacher couldn't stop himself from healing him.*

*He didn't! Zed chimed in. I heard about Aaron early this morning. He'd stayed awake all night. He was afraid he'd wake up this morning and discover it had all been a dream! It wasn't though, was it?*

*No, Ben assured him. He was healed all right. I called to see him myself. I expect half the town will have called by now.*

*So what went wrong? Zed asked.*

*Jesus got in first. Ben stood to ease his cramped legs. Brilliant it must have been. Jesus asked Isaac and his crowd if it was right to heal on the Sabbath? The very question they were going to ask him. Apparently they just stood there, speechless, while Jesus healed Aaron and sent him off out of the way. Then, as if that wasn't enough, when the guests got into conversation again and started to take their places, Jesus stopped them by calling out in a loud voice. 'Let me tell you a story.'*

*No! Zed's mouth dropped open. A story! A parable to teach them! They would never take that!*

*They did! Ben assured him. Jesus told them about guests at a wedding feast who put themselves in the best places, and then when some more important people arrived they had to be hooked out of their seats to make room for the new arrivals. And that wasn't all. He went on to say to Isaac, who by this time was looking thunderous, 'When you invite guests, don't start with your rich neighbours, go out and invite the poor and needy people from town. They can't pay you back, but God will!*

*I don't suppose Jesus stayed long after that! Zed was laughing but almost with disbelief. I understand that what Jesus said is how he himself lives. I imagine he's true to himself and a humble man, not like Isaac and many of the Pharisees. Money and Position makes them proud. I did some work for him once and you know, he couldn't even bring himself to notice us. I said to our Becca, 'Isaac forgets that people like us built the Temple.' He grinned as he remembered his words. If I'd been building it now I think I'd pray for some of the stones to fall on the likes of Isaac!*

Ben looked at him sternly. *No you wouldn't Zed. You're a craftsman, like me. We don't give shoddy work, whatever we think of the customer. We give the best because we love the stone and we respect our profession.*

*You're right, Zed replied thoughtfully, I remember talking to a visitor at the Temple only last year. He was admiring the stone work and he said, 'You know, a real craftsman is a humble man. He just wants us to see the stone and praise God. He doesn't leave his own name anywhere.'*

There was a brief pause in their conversation before Ben said. *They tell me that's how Jesus is. He just wants God to be praised, and then other people saved and healed to prove God's love. He's not worried about chief seats at the feast. But then he IS a craftsman - like his father. I've heard tell that anything from their workshop is a fine as you get anywhere.*

*Well, said Zed, he may be as humble as you like, but it seems to me, he put himself up front last night as far as Isaac's concerned. I know him. He won't let it rest. There'll be trouble ahead for Jesus, you'll see.*

*I don't doubt that, Ben agreed. But I don't think that will worry him. It's the craftsman thing again. He has a work to do, and he'll do it the best he can, whatever it cost.*