THE SON OF A KING

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There was once a man of little means who despised himself. His hair, shaggy and matted, drooped about a smudged, haggard face etched with frown lines. His eyes, dull and lifeless, were set deep beneath heavy brows, where they continually sought refuge from the gaze of passers-by. His shoulders slumped, not from physical deformity, but from neglect. From self-pity. From the weight of self-worthlessness, he had piled upon them. His clothing conformed to the rest of him—dirty, ill-fitting, tattered, and to be truthful, somewhat odorous. This man, old beyond his years, had shaped himself in the image of his self-perception. He was a burden to society. He was a burden to himself.

No one knows how he came across the book. Some say he found it while rummaging through garbage cans. Others say it was lying on the table of the library when he hurried into that building to escape the rain.

Wherever or however, the book was the beginning of a miracle.

It was about an ancient king. A good king. It told about his bravery and courage in the face of adversity, and his kindness and compassion to those who were less fortunate. It described his perseverance and steadfastness. It emphasized his deportment, his lofty carriage, his kingly grooming. And there were stories about his wisdom, about his righteous, merciful judgments, about his fairness and his honesty. In fact, it was a rather simple book—one that had been read by most school children.

Some would say there was nothing extraordinary about the book. That it was probably only legend anyway. But it changed the life of our friend. As he was reading through it, his mind seemed to reach back to an event long since forgotten.

Shortly before his mother's death, he sat upon her lap as she rocked back and forth, her fingers running through his hair. She was telling him a story about kings and queens. About castles and princes and princesses. Then she stopped.

"Son, did you know that we came from kings? Way back, a long, long time ago. *You* are descended from a king!

Don't ever forget that, son! Don't ever forget that!"

Now, as he read the book, the thought took over his mind: "You are descended from a king! You are descended from a king!" And to him it was as though the story he was reading was about his own ancestor.

Then, the disparity he saw between his ancestor king and himself, made him weep.

"What am I doing!" he cried. "I am the son of a king! What am I doing with my life?"

The change was almost instantaneous.

His hair was washed and trimmed. His clothes were cleaned, and his body washed. A strange fire began to dance in his eyes and his back and shoulders straightened. He greeted people as he walked down the street. And he smiled. He smiled a lot.

Years passed, and each year saw him become more like the king from whose loins he remembered he had sprung.

Now, as an old man, with his body held erect, he would walk daily from his lovely home on the edge of town to Main Street, up through the city park, and then back home. He would stop now and again to chat, to encourage, to counsel.

A stranger in town watched him as he proceeded one morning. He was absorbed in the mannerism, the carriage, and the light that radiated from this old gentleman.

"Who is he?" he asked of a local townsman.

"Him? Don't you know?" was the reply.

"He is the son of a king!"

We are all sons and daughters of God.

THE KING.

How would *we* act if we *always* remembered that?