

**The Hard Working King**  
**A parable**  
**by David Ohori**



Once there was a very wealthy King. He was the ruler of the most powerful nation in the world. But he wasn't always a king, in fact he was born a poor peasant. When he was a child, people would often tell him that he was just a peasant boy and he would always be a peasant boy. But even as a boy there was something deep inside that believed any individual, with enough hard work and perseverance, could be anything they wanted to be.

So starting at this young age, he worked hard, long days picking vegetables for farmers who would sell their produce in the local market. Eventually he earned enough money to buy a small merchant cart. Then he went around to all the farms he used to work for surrounding his village and gleaned the produce that farmers would throw away. He cleaned them up, put them in his cart and sold them in the market for a reduced price. His discounted vegetables became quite popular and so he repeated this day after day, year after year, until he had enough money to buy himself a small shop in the market. Now, the farmers were bringing their produce to him to sell. He continued this day after day, year after year, until he became the richest man in the village. Then he went to other villages and bought shops and became even richer.

Eventually this man, who started out life as a poor peasant, became so rich and so popular that people came from all over the land to seek his help and advice and, in some cases, even his protection. One day the king of the land became so jealous of this rich man he gathered up his army to attack him. But the rich

man had worked so hard, done so much, had earned so much money, that he had hired his own army to protect all his possessions and so he thwarted the attack and the king fell in battle. Because the king had no heir, the people quickly and unanimously chose the rich man to be their new king.

After a number of years, and after attaining everything he could possibly dream of, the rich man became unhappy. He decided he was unsatisfied and felt he was still missing something in his life. Then one day, while standing on his massive porch overlooking the land he ruled, he saw a section of land he had never noticed before. This piece of land appeared to be more beautiful than any other piece of land in all the kingdom and definitely more beautiful than any land the king could call his own possession. He thought to himself, "I have done so much, worked so hard, that I deserve the very best in the land, I deserve to be happy." So he decided that he would try and buy that parcel of land. Because he was a fair man and knew the value of hard work and the value of earning something, he decided he would go to the owner of the land and offer a fair price.

The owner of this beautiful parcel of land (arguably the most beautiful in all the land) was an old, wise, white-haired, woman who wore nothing more than rags for clothes, ate simple food and lived in a simple shack in the middle of a beautiful garden in the middle of this most beautiful parcel of land. After searching around for a little while, the king found the garden, and what appeared to be the owner of the land. The

second the king met this woman, he realized that even though she had so much less than himself, she was happier and more content than the king himself had ever been. And even though she was so old, she had a beauty that made every wrinkle, and every spot on her skin shine like priceless jewelry. The king thought, “this land is truly magical, and this old woman must have spent everything she had besides the clothes on her back in order to live and be happy in this beautiful piece of land. Surely, I will have to make it worth her while to sell it to me, so that I too can be as happy as she is.” So he said, very honourably, to the wise old woman, “I see this land has cost you almost everything you own, so it must carry great value. I will gladly pay *twice* the fair market price to own this piece of land.”

The old woman did not take long to respond and said, “I am sorry, I don’t need anything, so, you were thinking of the wrong price, but feel free to come in.” And with that, she smiled and went back into her shack and left the door ajar.

The king was shocked and feeling somewhat patronized, he walked away quite confused in thoughts and feelings. But he was used to having what he wanted, even if it took hard work and long hours so he went back the next day and he offered triple. The old woman answered much the same way, “I’m sorry but you were still thinking of the wrong price, so why not just come in?”

The king went away again, but now was getting a little annoyed. Not to be denied, he returned the next day and he offered ten times the going rate, but again received the same

answer. The king now indignant, and before the old woman could return into her shack, stopped her.

“I have worked for everything I own.” He exclaimed. “I have woken at dawn and worked well past sundown, I have sacrificed friends, and lovers, and a family of my own to earn all I possess. I know that there must be a price that we can agree on, please tell me what price I must offer.”

After a short time of contemplating, the old woman began to speak, “Listen, I received this land when I was a young girl, and I have lived on it and taken care of it and devoted my life to adding to its beauty. And before me, over hundreds of years, others have lived here and devoted their lives to make it as beautiful as humanly possible, that is why...”

Before the old woman could finish, the king interrupted, “Then I will pay you 100 times the fair market value!”

The old woman smiled and slowly shook her head.

“I... I... I will give you half of my kingdom! I just must have this beautiful piece of land!” The king desperately cried.

The old woman’s face became stern but gentle, “I fear you misunderstand me, the price of this land is free, all you must do to acquire it and the happiness it brings is to leave everything behind and move in.”

The king was shocked, thought deeply, and then hung his head low and walked away, because he could not afford to pay the price.



## **“The Hardworking King” reflection questions:**

What do you think of the king?

What do you think of the old woman?

Why do you think the king couldn't accept the price?

Does this story remind you of any stories from the Bible?

*Jesus once said that “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” Jesus was not just referring to “getting into heaven” when someone dies, he was referring to entering into participation with Him and others to build the kingdom here and now (Matthew 6:10; Luke 17:21). And to enter into experiencing life in the fullest (John 10:10).*

What in life may make it hard to enter the kingdom?

What makes it hard for you?

What might be things you have worked hard for that may keep you from fully entering?

Is the “price” worth it?

What might you be willing to release, or at least, hold a little lighter, to move further into the garden?