

And something in Nicodemus's heart said,

"Yes."

Things got uglier and uglier, the crowd became angrier and angrier, until at last, they carried the beggar off and beat him to death.



Then one by one they came to the palace door.

As each one entered, the heavy gold door thundered shut behind them. Time passed, and Nicodemus could hear the sound of crying somewhere off in the distance.

Well, at last it was Nicodemus's turn to step through the door.

He stepped through the entryway and the heavy door closed behind him.

What Nicodemus saw now I can't say - because there are no words to describe it! But it was more glorious, more brilliant, more splendid than all the stories he had ever heard.

And then he looked down at the robe he was wearing, and he knew at once it didn't belong in a place as perfect as this.

His heart sank.

Off to his left he saw the wealthy man who had entered just before him. His robe had looked even more carefully kept than his own before they had entered, but now, in the glorious light of the palace, it looked so shabby and dirty.

The poor owner was shown to a small door and let out. And as the door opened, Nicodemus could hear then that this was where the crying was coming from. It was the cry of all those souls who had seen what they could have had, but were found not worthy.

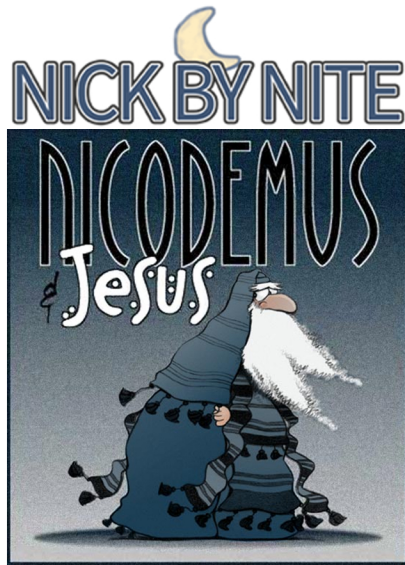
They all had been invited to the feast, but they could not be a part of it.



continued next time ...



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## A Story of Salvation

By Paul Dallgas-Frey

... continued from last time

Well, at last the day came.

A trumpet was heard off in the distance.

But what do you wear to the king's palace?

Your absolutely finest, of course. And for everyone in this poor village, that was the robe they each had received all those years before.

Only some of those robes weren't so fine anymore. Some were worse than others - some MUCH worse.

Some people were ashamed at how shabby their robes had become, and dreaded the thought of having to appear before the king in practically rags.

Some others didn't care, just as long as there was free food.

But Nicodemus had kept his robe cleaner than most. He tried his best.

Still, somehow it didn't seem to be enough.



The next morning, a path into the woods appeared. Everyone was sure there hadn't been one there before. And as the crowds pushed along it, foxes and squirrels and deer seemed to leap along beside them.

When they all arrived at the palace, they found that it was surrounded by a great wall made of the purest, whitest stone they had ever seen.

They crowded and pushed their way along the road that led up to the main gate - a magnificent gate, as high as twelve men, made entirely of gold.

But then, an astounding thing happened.

There was a poor beggar, in tattered rags, sitting near the gate.

"I am the King's son, listen to me!" the man said.

"The king loves you all so dearly, and his greatest desire is for you to come to his feast. But only those who are properly dressed can ever enter the king's palace. And look at you! But yet there is a way. Believe in me! Come in by me!"

Now, some people didn't take too kindly to the idea that their finest robes weren't worthy of the king, and so they began to make fun of the poor beggar man.

"Ha!" they said, "And look at the rags you are wearing!"

And they began to tease him and mock him... and then they spit on him, "There, that will help you clean your rags!" they said. The truth was, while the beggar's robes were torn and muddied, it didn't seem to be of his own doing - and somehow, their robes seemed all the shabbier in comparison.

They felt ashamed in his presence somehow, and they didn't like it. They didn't like it all.

Finally they had enough of this trouble-maker ruining their special day - he was the problem, after all, not them - and so they began to push and shove him. They wanted to remove him from their sight for good.

As they cruelly pushed him along, the young man looked into Nicodemus's eyes and asked,

"Do you believe in me?"