



*Memories of My Son  
By Mother*

**Spring Prayers  
from Our Son**

## Spring Prayers from Our Son

My husband, the itinerant preacher Alexander Rich, never ceases to amaze me with his ability to teach prayer, using the most abstract items, teaching people when I do not expect it, and glorifying our Lord, as if that is all Alexander was put on earth to do. But sometimes the teacher becomes the student, as you will see.

Our son turned ten years of age on March 19<sup>th</sup>, just a few weeks before our fifteenth wedding anniversary. I am so glad his birthday is near our anniversary. It is as if God is telling me, "Gretchen, here is Thomas, my special gift to you." And then a few weeks later, He says to me, "Gretchen, here is Alexander, my gift to you." I am so blessed.

Spring-time is always such a sweet time for me, of course because of the birthday and anniversary, but for other reasons too. I see the trees begin to bud and the flowers start to poke their heads out of the ground. I love the smell of spring. It is like no other time of year.

Of course, depending upon where we are in Georgia there can also be a week of very yellow pollen. Some years it is so thick it appears to turn green. And everywhere! Whew, it gets into everything.

And then there are the animals. The birds seem to take on a different attitude as spring arrives. They seem to chirp louder and fly around more. Their singing seems different this time of year. It is as if they are becoming more friendly.

I love the squirrels. They are so precious. They climb the trees and jump from branch to branch looking for something to forage. Sometimes they look at you and you know what they are thinking, "You may be bigger than me, human, but I'm faster and more agile. I can jump but you cannot."

There are bigger animals about too, but with all of our traveling, from church to church, we rarely see them. Occasionally we will hear a large cat, even a bear, but we rarely see them.

You will know from Mark's book, *The Prayers, Book 1, Troubles* that I grew up in the city of Jeffersonville. While we were surrounded by a forest, my formative years were spent learning the merchant's life since that is what my family did for a living.

Alexander on the other hand has always been an outdoors person. He grew up outdoors, roamed the outdoors and chose to leave his good friend Dwight Lyman Moody in Northfield Massachusetts so that he could be an itinerant preacher here in Georgia, to which I am forever grateful to our Lord.

Ever since our son Thomas could talk, Alexander taught him about the outdoor animals and trees and bushes and grasses. And of course, while out of doors, here in the wild, Thomas learned prayer, from both Alexander, and from me.

One of the first verses that Alexander made Thomas memorize was Romans 1:20, which talks of the creation seen by us mortals.

My husband uses two versions of the Bible, depending upon which one he believes best gives the intent of the original writer. This sometimes raises a question with his, "King James ONLY friends," as Alexander lovingly refers to them.

I've heard him say to them, "Pastor, when you read the King James to your congregation, do you explain it in King James English or in Georgian?"

This often gets a chuckle from them because whatever dialect Alexander speaks, "it ain't Georgian!" he likes to say.

Anyway, the version he had Thomas memorize this verse in was the English Standard Version, *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

He did this for a very simple reason, Alexander wanted Thomas to learn the verse by praying it to the Lord at least once a day, and usually every time we were on our buckboard. I memorized it along with Thomas, and we learned it this way:

*Lord, and Father, Your attributes, Your power, and Your divine nature are clearly perceived by us, and all mankind, ever since creation, and we see these attributes in everything that you have made, so that we on earth have no excuse to not see You. Thank You Lord for declaring so much of Yourself to us.*

But on the occasion of Thomas' tenth birthday, Alexander learned something about the outdoors and about prayer that he did not expect to learn.

Don't you just love it when God intervenes, and the teacher becomes the student? And in this case, the ten-year-old became the teacher.

Let me explain.

We travel from town to town on our buckboard. It's quite comfortable and often Thomas is upfront with us. The buckboard is pulled by Sterling, who has been with Alexander for quite a while, since before we were married. He is a huge horse, standing 17h. I declare, I do not know how Alexander ever mounted him?

Nevertheless, Alexander likes to tell us of the times when he and Sterling would leave a town and Alexander would give Sterling the reins and he would pull out his Bible and read, often for hours, while Sterling went to the next location, almost without any steering from him.

The first few times Thomas heard these stories from his he just loved them. And then he realized that the stories were told for a reason. And the reason was that Alexander would then use the time on the buckboard, to put Thomas through Bible study.

On this occasion, Alexander was in for a real treat.

During the previous week Alexander had just started preparing for his Easter sermon which he would give two and a half weeks after Thomas' birthday.

Alexander likes to be a few weeks ahead in his preaching, and he likes to take Thomas and me along in the study process.

We had been reading Luke 19 over and over again, specifically the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. I say we, but the truth is, Thomas always did the reading. Alexander said that, "this is the way I learned to read, this is good for Thomas too."

And so, all week Thomas would read beginning with, "*And when he had thus spoken, he went before, ascending up to Jerusalem,*" which is verse twenty-eight.

I remember so clearly, these five years later, how Thomas' voice would build in excitement reading the verse above, as if a crescendo were about to happen. He seemed to insert himself into the story he was reading.

Thomas would then go back to reading, making his way through Bethpage and Bethany.

And then Thomas would get to the mount of Olives and send his two disciples off to town ahead of him to prepare the colt. For now he was reading the lines in the first person. After all, he had learned them so well reading them over and over so many times.

Interestingly, Thomas always rushed through the remainder of the passage, until he got to verse 40, and there he would take his time, reading the last portion of the passage very slowly, "*. . . if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.*"

I don't know where my husband learned the ability to teach, but more than once I wanted to correct Thomas and make him read it all with the same intensity, but Alexander would gently, and clearly put his hand on my shoulder to stop me. "He's learning something darling. Let the Lord impress upon his little heart what He wants to."

We like to be back in Jeffersonville when it is Thomas' birthday, so my husband works his schedule to accommodate me in this request. Sure, Thomas has adopted family all over east/central Georgia, but his only true kin, in Georgia, are my parents who still live in Jeffersonville.

This day we were entering Jeffersonville from the extreme north after being in Gordon at the church Alexander helped start in 1876. Coming down into Jeffersonville from here always allows us to stop at our good friends the Borax's, which we did.

Immediately after stopping Thomas jumped down and ran to the mill. I remember being embarrassed because he just ran by Josephine and Bubba, whom Thomas loves greatly.

Curious, Alexander and I followed Thomas, after making our apologies to the Borax's who didn't mind. They loved watching Thomas run around their mill.

While Josephine and Bubba groomed Sterling I followed Alexander into the mill, very quietly so that we could watch Thomas. At first, we had no idea what he

was doing, and then we heard him. He was trying to mimic the sound of the great stones rubbing up against one another.

As if he knew we were there he turned and said, like a little man, "Jesus was right. The stones are crying out."

We were just silent and let him continue.

"All week-long father, I have been reading the passage of Jesus' triumphal entry and at the end where Jesus talks about the stones I kept looking around for stones that were crying out to Him. But I didn't see any. But I knew I had heard rocks crying out, I just didn't remember, and then when we came to Bubba and Josephine's"

"Mr. and Mrs. Borax, young man," I corrected.

"Yes ma'am." He responded.

"I knew I had heard what Jesus talked about. I knew I had heard rocks crying out." He inclined his little body over and listen to the noise they are making.

"Do you hear it." He continued. "They are rolling and rolling, making noise and God is hearing them."

The more he talked the wider his eyes got. He had found a treasure in God's creation.

Fighting back tears Alex walked over to Thomas and put his hand on his still humming son, "Thomas, my boy." Alex got down onto Thomas' level and looked him in the eyes and continued. "You are a wise son, and a creative son."

Alexander called me over to him and Thomas and in the mill, with the sound, loud, but Alexander praying louder he said, "Oh dear Father, maker of heaven and earth. You are the One who spoke the words and the worlds leapt into existence. You have made your creation perfectly, and we clearly understand that You are creator, that Your creation speaks of You and we are without excuse.

"Thank You for my dear son." And with that I felt Thomas grow two inches taller, with a righteous pride since his father was lifting his name to God.

And Alexander continued, "My son has taught me a valuable lesson today Lord. He has taught me that your creation cries out to You. Amen.

And with the honesty that only a ten-year-old could muster, he looked up and asked, "You didn't know that father?"

Alexander and I smiled at one another. We are so blessed.

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