

## **THE DINNER GUEST**

Ruth went to her mailbox and there was only one letter. She picked it up and looked at it before opening, but then she looked at the envelope again. There was no stamp, no postmark, only her name and address. She read the letter:

Dear Ruth,  
I'm going to be in your neighborhood Saturday afternoon and I'd like to stop by for a visit.  
Love Always,  
Jesus

Her hands were shaking as she placed the letter on the table. "Why would the Lord want to visit me? I'm nobody special. I don't have anything to offer." With that thought, Ruth remembered her empty kitchen cabinets. "Oh my goodness, I really don't have anything to offer. I'll have to run down to the store and buy something for dinner." She reached for her purse and counted out its contents, \$5.40. "Well, I can get some bread and cold cuts, at least." She threw on her coat and hurried out the door.

She bought a loaf of French bread, a half-pound of sliced turkey, and a carton of milk, leaving Ruth with a grand total of twelve cents to last her until Monday. Nonetheless, she felt as she headed home with her meager offerings tucked under her arm, she was grateful to be able to serve her dinner guest.

"Hey lady, can you help us, lady?" Ruth had been so absorbed in her dinner plans and she hadn't even noticed the two figures huddled in the alleyway. A man and a woman, both of them dressed in little more than rags. Look lady, I aint' got a job, ya know, and my wife and I have been living out here on the street, and, well, now it's getting cold and we're getting kinda hungry and, well, if you could help us, lady, we'd really appreciate it."

Ruth looked at them both. They were dirty, they smelled bad and, frankly, she was certain that they could get some kind of work if they really wanted to. "Sir, I'd like to help you, but I'm a poor woman myself. All I have is a few cold cuts and some bread, and I'm having an important guest for dinner tonight and I was planning on serving that to Him." "Yeah, well, OK lady, I understand. Thanks anyway." The man put his arm around the woman's shoulders, turned and headed back into the alley.

As she watched them leave, Ruth felt a familiar twinge in her heart. "Sir, wait!" The couple stopped and turned as she ran down the alley after them. "Look, why don't you take this food. I'll figure out something else to serve my guest." She handed the man her grocery bag. "Thank you lady, thank you very much!" "Yes, thank you!" It was the man's wife, and Ruth could see now that she was shivering. "You know, I've got another coat at home. Here, why don't you take this one." Ruth unbuttoned her jacket and slipped it over the woman's shoulders. Then smiling, she turned and walked back to the street...without her coat and with nothing to serve her guest. "Thank you lady, thank you very much!"

Ruth was chilled by the time she reached her front door and worried too. The Lord was coming to visit and she didn't have anything to offer Him. She fumbled through her purse for the door key. As she did she noticed another envelope in her mailbox. "That's odd." The mailman doesn't usually come twice in one day." She took the envelope out of the box and opened it.

Dear Ruth,  
It was so good to see you again. Thank you for the lovely meal. And thank you, too, for the beautiful coat.  
Love Always,  
Jesus

The air was still cold, but even without her coat, Ruth no longer noticed.

***"Well Done Good & Faithful Servant!"***