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GREAT THINGS CAME OUT OF SALEM

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(adapted from The Smallville to Nazareth)

PRAYER

There was a man who owned a Great Dane. Now this Great Dane was an extremely large and ferocious dog. One day, as the man was walking his Great Dane down the street, he saw a woman across the street that was also walking her dog—a little bitty dog with short legs no tail and no hair. It was an ugly dog and frankly, it looked terribly sick.

Suddenly the Great Dane saw the little ugly dog across the street and decided he hated that dog. He broke free from his owner's leash and dashed across the street on the attack. The owner of the Great Dane yelled to the woman, "Look out! My dog is on the loose and he's liable to kill you and your dog! You had better run!" But the little ugly dog turned around, bared its teeth, and when the Great Dane attacked, that little dog proceeded to grab hold of the Great Dane at the foreleg and began to eat that big dog up. It ate right up the leg, right up the throat, ate its head, right down through its body, across the tail, down the back legs – the little bitty dog spit out the bones - smacked its lips-and that was the end of the Great Dane. Well, the owner of the Great Dane was absolutely astonished by what he had just witnessed. "Man, what kind of dog is that?" the man exclaimed. "I've never in my life seen a little dog that could do something like that!"

"Dog? Dog?" the woman said. "Before it got its nose run over by a truck and his tail cut off by a train, this used to be an alligator!"

Young people, you may feel like a puppy dog on the outside, but inside, you're an alligator. You have the power of God at your disposal to do mighty things. This morning we're going to talk about your superpowers and the Superhero in You. Can you leap tall buildings in a single bound? Are you faster than a speeding bullet? Are you more powerful than a locomotive? You may not have the abilities of Superman, but you possess the power above all powers, the power of God.

GREAT THINGS CAME OUT OF SALEM

Between the child rocketed from the doomed planet Krypton and the symbol of truth and justice Superman is destined to become, lies a vitally important aspect of Superman mythology—Smallville.

Catching fire upon entering Earth's atmosphere, the baby Kal-El's spaceship looked more like a meteorite streaking across the Midwestern sky. Swerving off the road in their Ford pickup truck, Jonathan and Martha Kent are the only witnesses to the mysterious spacecraft's crash landing. Both fascinated and afraid, Jonathan and Martha climb out of their overturned truck and into the impact crater created by Kal-El's arrival. But, both their fear and their hearts melted when the ship revealed its tiny infant occupant.

Jonathan and Martha had been trying for eight years to have a baby, but, so far, had been unsuccessful. In fact, in *Superman: The Movie*, while coddling her precious boy, Martha explains, "All these years, as happy as we've been, how I've prayed and prayed the good Lord see fit to give us a child." Although Jonathan was hesitant at first, Martha persuaded him to take Kal-El into their home and raise him as their own son, giving him the name Clark Joseph Kent.

Jonathan and Martha are farmers on a modest piece of land just outside of Smallville, Kansas. The farm has been in Jonathan's family since 1871 when Nathaniel Kent first settled there shortly after the Civil War. Although, his Kryptonian heritage would provide Clark with "powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men," it was his upbringing in Smallville that would help define who he was to become. The creators of Superman, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster wrote, "The love and guidance of his kindly foster-parents was to become an important factor in the shaping of the Kal-El's future."

Nowhere in Superman lore is this seen more prevalent than in the television series *Smallville*. David Nutter, who directed the pilot episode of *Smallville*, said in his commentary, "I thought there were a lot of metaphors between Clark and Jesus actually—and I tried to throw in as many of them as I could."

In one episode of *Smallville*, Clark discovers his heritage. He learns about Krypton and receives a message from his father, Jor-El: "you will be God among men..."

As Clark struggles to come to grips with his destiny, Jonathan takes him by the shoulders, and looking him in the eye, says, "Clark Kent, you're here to be a force for good, not for evil."

"How can you be so sure?" Clark replies.

"Because I am your father," Jonathan answers. "Because I raised you, and I know

you better than anyone.”

Young people this is the same message God is giving you – “I know you better than anyone – Mom, Dad, Grandparents, your best, best, bestest friend – God knows all about you. It is God's desire that as God's disciple you:

- never put a stumbling block in the spiritual path of others
- forgive quickly and often
- exercise faith and demonstrate faithfulness
- be willing to be followers of Jesus Christ.

It may have been Clark's Kryptonian parents that made him Super, but it was his earthly parents that made him a Man. This is the desire of your parents, young people, as they live a holy and Christian life for you to emulate.

This is what we want to accomplish in raising our children:

To lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

To lead them to a total commitment of their lives to Christ.

To build the Word of God into their lives.

To teach them prompt and cheerful obedience, and respect for authority.

To teach them self-discipline.

To teach them to accept responsibility.

To teach them the basic traits of Christian character such as love, faithfulness, integrity, zeal, patience, and joy. [1]

In a spiritual sense we want our children to move from 100% dependence on us to 100% dependence on God.

Sadly, in *Superman: The Movie* as well as in *Smallville*, Jonathan would die from a heartache while Clark was still in his teenage years. But his mother and the lessons he learned from his earthly father would continue to influence him all the days of his life.

Jonathan and Martha are the quintessential Mary and Joseph. Believe it or not, Martha was originally named Mary in the first *Superman* comic book (the name was later changed without explanation) and Jonathan's middle name was Joseph. So, the young couple who would raise a Superman, was named Mary and Joseph. Like Jonathan and Martha, the earthly parents of Jesus came from humble beginnings. Joseph was a carpenter who, like a farmer, would work primarily with his hands in a small town called Nazareth. He, too, was hesitant to accept the child God had sent at first because Joseph believed that Mary had been unfaithful to him. So, Joseph “planned to divorce her secretly” (Matthew 1:19). It took direct intervention on God's part to convince Joseph to accept Mary's pregnancy and their unborn baby.

Scott Beatty describes Jonathan and Martha as “God-fearing folks.” The Bible also

tells us that “Mary’s husband, Joseph, was a good man” (Matthew 1:19). Unfortunately, the last time we see Joseph is when Jesus is about twelve years old. Most Biblical scholars surmise that Joseph, like Jonathan, died when Jesus was still in his teenage years. But, just as Clark Kent’s upbringing would forever influence his life, Jesus’ earthly parents played an important role in his makeup. You see, Jesus’ humanity is just as important as his divinity.

Clark would live and work on his parent’s farm until he graduates from high-school. Even then, it would be several years after that before he makes his first public appearance as Superman. Once he begins his public service or ministry, Superman retains his secret identity as Clark Kent. One mistake that people often make is thinking that Kal-El is really Superman, and that he only disguises himself as Clark Kent. The Man of Steel is just as much Clark Kent as he is Superman, and he is just as much Superman as he is Clark Kent—the two are really inseparable. He is fully Superman and fully Clark.

As you know, the same can be said for our Savior. Jesus Christ is just as human as he is divine, and just as divine as he is human. Before Jesus would become the Savior of the world, he was a carpenter in his father’s shop in Nazareth. Jesus’ humanity is important. Jesus is like us in every respect—human body, heart, mind and will—except for sin ([Hebrews 2:17](#); [4:15](#)).

Hebrews 2:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ For this reason he had to be made like them,^[a] fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.

How amazing that the divine Son of God would not just take on part of our humanity but all of it—and then take that true humanity all the way to the cross for us.

As we come to know Jesus, we can look to him for sympathy and understanding. When we are tired, it is great to know that our Lord Jesus also got tired and had to rest (John 4:6). When we are hungry, it feels good to know that Jesus also knows what it is like to be hungry (Matt 4:2). We know that when Jesus was hanging on the cross, he became thirsty and he cried out for water. We know that Jesus had to sleep each night just like we do. There were a number of occasions when Jesus prayed to his Father for strength. We too, when we are weak, can pray to our heavenly Father for strength. Jesus knows what it is like to lose a loved one; he wept when Lazarus died. When we feel as if we have been betrayed by our friends,

we know that Jesus can identify.

He was beaten and bruised. He was despised by humanity. He was poor. He spent many nights with a rock as his pillow. When we experience the worst life has to offer, we can remember that we have a Savior who has been there!

Unfortunately, because Jesus is so human, many people reject the idea that he is also God.

This can be paralleled in *Superman*. Time and time again, Clark suffered rejection from Lois Lane—the woman of his dreams—because she thought of him as nothing more than a mild mannered reporter, with geeky glasses and a meek personality. She almost never realized that beneath the glasses and mild mannered exterior, was a Man of Steel—a hero to all.

How many people do the same with Jesus? How many people claim that Jesus was certainly a moral man, but far from divine? Just as Lois mocked Clark's small town origins, wasn't it Nathaniel who said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Who would think to look for a God, dressed like a man? But that's precisely who Jesus is—God cloaked in humanity.

A select few are able to see through Christ's meekness and discover his majesty. When Clark finally revealed himself to Lois, in *Superman #53*, her first reaction was utter disbelief, but after taking a moment to think she says, "It's not that I'm shocked—actually I'm kind of relieved... I mean, it's like a puzzle that suddenly makes sense because the missing piece is finally in place... In my heart I think I've known for a long time, but my brain would always dismiss the notion."

Lois' words echo the feelings of so many people when they finally see Jesus for who he is. Mary and Joseph, Jonathan and Martha, Smallville, Nazareth, Clark Kent, and the humanity of Christ work together to help us see Jesus for who he is—fully God and fully man. Jesus' dual nature reveals one inconceivable reality—God loved us enough to become one of us.

Our infinite God confined himself within human flesh, because he loves us. Our limitless Lord limited himself to the stretch of an arm, because he cared for you and me. The hands that created the universe were blistered by a carpenter's hammer, because he loved us enough to become one of us. As a young man he became very familiar with the tools of his father's trade. How fitting then that those very tools would be used to secure our salvation. With a hammer and nails, he was a carpenter. With a hammer and nails, he was our Savior.