



The Bible Corner

Cindy Cottone

The Name

Mara glanced at Anna as she continued stubbornly along the road toward Jerusalem. Sometimes, she was glad that her daughter could not see. If Anna was able to look into her face at this moment, she would be certain to see a very angry expression. Mara preferred her quiet, lonely existence in the mountains far from the busy life of the city. She could almost forget there that her daughter, Anna, was blind. There weren't many people to stare at them in the remote area of the mountains where they lived.

But twice now this month, she and Anna had trudged along this hot, dusty road to Jerusalem. And why? Because Anna refused to let go of her silly dream. All her life, Anna had clung to this false hope that she would be healed. And who was Mara to tell her that she would never have her dream? This dream had kept them both going through all of their rough times. Mara often worried about who would take care of Anna after she died. Her own husband, Aaron, had not wanted a life limited by a blind person. He had left one day and never came back.

So now, for the second time, Mara and Anna together made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Mara frowned as she remembered the last trip to Jerusalem. Even she had brought to the city a small speck of hope that time.

"Mother," Anna had said, "I just know that this time I will be healed! Jesus has cured other blind people. He

has even cast out demons. We must go to Jerusalem and find Him. I believe that Jesus can heal me too!"

Jerusalem was in turmoil when they had arrived. The Jewish leaders had sent Jesus off to the Roman authorities on some ridiculous charge. They had crucified Jesus. He was dead. And once again, Anna's hopes were crushed. But now she nurtured a new dream. She had heard that the followers of Jesus were performing the same kinds of miracles.

"Mother," Anna's voice interrupted Mara's thoughts. "We must be almost to Jerusalem by now."

"Yes, Anna," Mara replied sadly, "we'll be there soon."

"I can't wait, Mother! I have a feeling that this time it will be different. I think that Jesus lives on somehow through His followers."

"Oh, Anna, please don't get your hopes up," Mara cautioned. "I don't think that I can stand another disappointment."

"It's hard not to be excited! They say that every day Jesus' apostles go to the Temple to pray. The people come from all over and line the streets with their sick on cots and mats. If but the shadow of one of these apostles falls on them, they are healed!" Anna said excitedly.

"Anna, please. That doesn't make much sense to me. Just promise me that you won't be depressed for days if you are not healed. When Jesus died, you didn't talk or eat for days."

"I promise I won't," Anna assured her mother. "Can you do something for me when we get to Jerusalem?"

Mara hesitated for a moment. Whatever Anna asked of her, she knew that she would never say no. She just didn't want her daughter to be hurt anymore than she had already been in her life. Deep down, Mara felt it was her fault about Anna's blindness. Maybe God was punishing her somehow.

"Well, mother," Anna asked again. "Can I count on you?"

"Of course, Anna, what is it?"

"Can you make sure that I am on the side of the street where the shadows fall? I want to be there when Jesus' followers pass by."

"Yes, Anna, I'll make sure," Mara answered.

Jerusalem was crowded with people. Mara led Anna toward the street where the Temple stood. She gasped when she saw how many people stood waiting for these followers of Jesus. Everywhere, sick people lay on cots and mats. It would be difficult to find a place to even stand.

"Hurry, Anna," Mara said, "maybe if we wait near the Temple gate we'll have a better chance of meeting these followers of Jesus."

A crippled man was lying on a mat by the Temple gate. His legs were too twisted to even stand. He stopped each person who came to enter the Temple.

"Alms for a poor man. Do you have a coin for a needy beggar?" he asked.

Mara continued to watch the beggar as the two men approached. The beggar was lying right in their path. It would be impossible for them not to stop. These two men must be the apostles because of the way the crowd surged forward. Maybe she could force her way through the people and reach them before they entered the Temple. She saw the beggar reach out now to the two men.

"Please, do you have a little money

you can give me? I have to beg for my very life," he said.

"We have no money at all to give you," one of the apostles said. "But we can give you something even better. In the Name of Jesus, be healed! Get up and walk!"

Then the man took the beggar by his arm and pulled him to his feet. "Do you know by whose power you have been healed? Not by my power, but by faith in the power of Jesus have you been cured," he said.

The beggar not only stood by himself, but he leaped and ran after the two apostles into the Temple. Mara turned to her daughter now.

"Anna, I'm sorry. I couldn't get through the crowd. Let's go back home. I promise that we'll come back another day."

Mara watched her daughter. There were tears streaming down her face and she looked radiant. What could this poor, helpless creature have to be happy about? Very slowly, Anna's mouth formed the name, "Jesus."

For discussion:

- 1) What does it mean when we say a family has a good 'name'?
- 2) The name 'Mara' is Hebrew for 'bitter.' Do you think God punished Mara by Anna's blindness? Can Jesus heal someone who is bitter?
- 3) What was the feeling that Anna had inside of her about Jesus?
- 4) Could someone really be healed by the apostles' shadows? What really gave the apostles the power to perform miracles?
- 5) The apostles healed the beggar in the Name of Jesus. What does the Name of Jesus mean to you?
- 6) Do you think that Anna was healed? Was Mara healed of her bitterness? What kinds of things can Jesus heal?

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