

THE PARABLE OF THE BANANA TREE

By Anton T. Kumarasamy

As told to Linda J. Later

Banana trees are common where I live in Sri Lanka. They have soft trunks, which are easy to cut with a knife, but no one hurts the banana tree because it gives fine fruit.

Many years ago when I was small, there was a terrible storm. When it finally ended, I went outside and saw that one of our banana trees had blown over; it was uprooted and stripped of leaves. I thought cutting the trunk of the ruined tree would be fun, so I went to the house and found a knife. But just as I was about to strike, my grandfather stopped me.

“You mustn’t hurt the banana tree,” he said.

“But why?” I asked. “It’s not good anymore, and it would be fun.”

My grandfather said nothing but beckoned for me to follow him. He told me to cut a big stick. Then he brought me back to the yard where the banana tree lay. Though it appeared useless, we went to work pulling it upright. Once the trunk was straight, we braced the frail tree with the stick.

“Anton,” my grandfather said, “I want you to watch this banana tree every day and make sure it stays straight. Every day you will need to water it and give it nourishment.”

So every morning I checked the banana tree to make sure the trunk was straight.



The storm-damaged banana tree appeared to be dying. But with some love, care, and daily nourishment, it not only recovered but also bore fruit.

Every day I filled a water bucket and carefully poured it around the roots. I was diligent in giving the tree the nourishment it needed.

Soon there were blossoms and, shortly after that, bananas. When the fruit was ripe, Grandfather handed a banana to each member

of the family. I watched with pleasure as they peeled and ate them. No bananas ever tasted as good as those, and it brought me joy to see my family enjoying them.

That was many years ago, long before I found The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But the lessons I learned as I cared for the banana tree apply to my life today. In my Church callings as well as my medical practice, I often find people in difficult predicaments. Like that banana tree, these people are forsaken, stripped of beauty, and finished—even in their own eyes. When I think of giving up on them, I remember the sweetness of the fruit of that banana tree and find the courage to help lift them upright, brace them, nourish them, and care for them daily as the Savior would.

The bananas my family enjoyed were sweet, but the Book of Mormon tells of another kind of fruit—one that is “most sweet” and “desirable above all other fruit” (see 1 Nephi 8:11–12). We can find joy as we help those who are struggling to find their way through the mists of darkness and guide them to partake of the fruit that is sweet above all—the fruit of eternal life. ■