





Seeing a Child of God

BY HAZEL LAMOREAUX

(Based on a true story)

They were men of truth . . . , for they had been taught to keep the commandments of God (Alma 53:21).

The door burst open. Cold winter air rushed into the hall with Billy. Mike, his older brother, crowded in behind, followed by Mom and Dad.

“Grandma! We’re here for dinner!” Billy shouted. He hurried into the kitchen, smelling spicy pumpkin pie, roasted turkey, and sage dressing.

Grandma smiled. “It’ll take a while to get dinner on the table, boys,” she said. “You’ll find crayons and paper on the hall table. How about a picture?”

At the table, Mike began coloring, but Billy peered into the living room. It was full of porcelain figurines, an old sugar bowl, and other treasures. Grandma called them heirlooms. Each had its own pioneer story.

Billy’s gaze fastened on a small mirror on a shelf. Billy loved the mirror most because its story was his favorite.

It had come across the plains with Great-Great-Great Grandma in a covered wagon. She was a little girl then—Billy’s age now. At the end of

long days, she cried because her feet hurt from walking and her face hurt from sunburn. Sometimes she saw Indians and was frightened.

The girl’s mother would hand her the little mirror. “Look at yourself in the mirror,” she would say gently. “Heavenly Father will take care of His child.” And the little girl would be comforted, say her prayers, and go to sleep.

Billy turned away from the living room and was reaching for a red crayon when the big oval mirror at the end of the hall caught his eye. He forgot about the crayon, walked to the mirror, and stretched as tall as he could.

“What are you doing?” Mike asked. “Trying to see a child of God.”

“Too short, huh?” Mike said. Under the mirror, a low shelf held Grandma’s prized Boston fern. “I’ll give you a boost up to the shelf.”

With Mike’s arms around him, Billy kicked his feet in search of the shelf.

He found the shelf, but knocked the fern to the floor. Black dirt spilled all over the carpet.

The fern was smashed and broken, its bare roots sticking into the air.

Suddenly the shelf gave way. Billy bumped heads with Mike as he fell, then landed





facedown in the dirt.

“What will we do?” Billy whispered, pushing himself up.

“Sometimes the cat gets on the shelf,” Mike said.

“Maybe Grandma will think the cat did it.”

“But it wouldn’t be the truth,” Billy said. “We did it, so we should tell.”

“OK, but let’s wait until after dinner.”

“Wash up and come to dinner, boys,” Mom called.

When the two boys sat down at the table, Grandpa said the blessing. Everybody started to eat, but the food tasted like rubber in Billy’s mouth.

“Is something wrong?” Dad asked.

“I don’t like peas very much,” Billy mumbled.

Dad frowned. “How did you get the bump on your forehead?”

“Excuse me,” Billy mumbled, and fled to the bathroom.

Mom and Dad followed him. “Are you sick?” Mom asked.

Billy shook his head. “I stood on Grandma’s shelf. It broke. When I fell, Mike and I bumped heads. I just wanted to see a child of God in the big mirror.” Billy’s chest heaved. “Grandma’s fern is ruined. I feel awful—not at all like a child of God.”

“I helped him get on the shelf,” Mike said in a soft voice from behind Mom and Dad. “We didn’t know it would break. I don’t feel like a child of God either.”

“We thought maybe you’d think the cat did it,” Billy said. “We decided to tell the truth after dinner.”

“Well, now,” Grandma said, joining them. “No matter

what you do, you are always a child of God. But I’m glad that you chose to tell the truth.”

Grandpa looked at the bent brackets that had held the shelf to the wall. “I reckon this can be fixed,” he said. “Grandma’s fern can be repotted. It looks pretty bedraggled, but it’ll likely grow out again.”

Grandma put the broken fern into the pot. “Even if it doesn’t grow, I can get a new plant,” she said. “But I could never replace these two children of God.”

“Look,” Dad said, holding Billy up to the mirror. “See the child who was tempted to blame the cat, but didn’t? How about giving him a smile?”

Billy managed a weak smile.

Back at the table, Billy noticed that everything—even the peas—now tasted delicious.

After dinner, Billy held the little mirror as Grandma told the story of how it had comforted the girl who was his long-ago grandma.

When the story was finished, all of them took a turn telling something each was thankful for. Billy looked into the little mirror and said, “I’m thankful to be a child of God.” ●

“If you really know that you are a child of God, you will also know that He expects much of you. . . . He will be offended if you are dishonest in any way.”¹

President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008)

