

## **City on a Hill**

This is a story that is also a parable- a parable is a story that has more than one meaning- the first meaning is literally what the words say, the second meaning is what the story implies, what it teaches us.

One upon a time, (I don't know about you, but for me the best stories always start out, once upon a time).

Once upon a time, there was a city on a hill. It was pretty much your average city, not too large and not too small. This particular city was very beautiful. There was a harbor, a lovely river, and many hills.

As in all cities, there were a few people in the city who were rich, some people who were poor, and a great many who were neither rich nor poor. Unlike many other cities, it was also true that some of the poorest neighborhoods had some of the best views.

The city had a mayor, and he was all right, he certainly cared about the neighborhoods. The city had a city council, and it spent a lot time arguing, a school system like all big city school systems with many challenges but with a superintendent who tried hard, and of course there was a police department that had the job to make the city safe.

The city also had a lot of other people, sort of your every day kind of people who lived in the neighborhoods throughout the entire city. They were fine but nothing to write home about, at least they didn't think they were special. These citizens went about their lives, and did their jobs, that kind of thing. This city also had a ton of kids, lots of them. They were everywhere, and while they did play, and they did laugh once in a while, they weren't as noisy and lively, as kids in some other cities were. If you know what I mean?

So here we are, looking at this average kind of city, when something happened that changed everything.

One night, I think it was in April, Spring was in the air, and it might even have been a beautiful, clear Tuesday night, not unlike this night, when this big deal event happened that changed forever the city and those who lived in it.

I am not really supposed to tell what happened but because you look like nice people, I will. What happened was a dream! What happened is that one person on each and every block of the city had a dream. "Big deal! You might say, everybody has dreams." What was different about this dream is that everyone had the same dream. What I mean is that hundreds of people, all kinds of people, old people, young people, rich people, poor people, and those who were neither rich nor poor, one for each and every block, had the exact same dream at the exact same time on the very same Tuesday night, a night just like this one.

This was the dream. Each person dreamed that she or he would get up the next morning, and do something to make the city a better place to live.

Hello! Say again! Do what? Do whatever, it didn't matter.

- Some people dreamed about cleaning up a vacant lot and planting a vegetable garden.
- Some people dreamed that they had started an exciting community school for little kids to go to while their Mom was working.
- Some grandmotherly people dreamed that they would take care of sick children.
- Some people dreamed that they helped homeless people find homes, and get jobs.
- Some young people who themselves had been very poor dreamed that they would help other young people escape poverty.
- Some people dreamed that they were called to be a minister to others.
- And some people dreamed that they would work hard to make their neighborhood a better place.

Well guess what happened next?

When all of these people woke up, they immediately went out and did exactly what they had dreamt they had done. Exactly! To the tee!

Now here is the punch line (every parable worth its salt has a punch line).

Six months later this was not your average city any more, this was a wonderful city, and this was the greatest city. The mayor was the best mayor in the country, the school system was doing very well indeed, and the police department got rave reviews.

But most of all the people were more than just OK, they were inspired, they were bustling around, talking to each other, saying good morning, solving problems that had appeared to be too tough to solve, and having themselves the best time. Everywhere you turned there were new unsung heroes, community activists and social entrepreneurs.

And the kids, the ton of kids, they were really happy, they played, and they laughed more than kids anywhere else.

And remember those views, the lovely ones from the tops of the hills spread throughout the city, they seemed even more beautiful with each passing day.

The End.

