

### The man of the field

During the night Samuel, a farmer, was roused from his sleep when strong rain suddenly clashed with the roof. Immediately he thought: I should go out and make a tent to cover the plants of the field lest they get buffeted by the rain and break.

But having thought about it some more, he chose to stay in bed telling himself: it's too early, and besides the plants will be fine, they like the rain, whereas I would rather not get wet. And he turned on his side falling fast asleep.

Meanwhile, across on the other side of the field another farmer, named Eric, was also promptly roused from sleep. The rain here was just as strong. And being a committed, foresightful man, he got up straight away to cover the plants outside. While he sat by the bright fire of the fireplace and put on his boots, he decided to forgo his cloak seeing as how the rain was too strong for it anyway.

Stepping outside he was a little surprised at how dark it still was. Must be early, he thought to himself and gazed into the cloud painted sky, trying hard to spot the moon, but the clouds were too thick, not offering a single glimpse at the sky beyond them.

Fumbling around in the dark for a bit, it took his eyes a little time to adjust from the light of the fireplace, but pretty soon he started to see well enough to drive the tent stakes into the ground. It wasn't difficult work since the ground had become soft from the rain, but the combination of heavy rain and wind made it pretty exhausting.

When he had finished, he returned home drenched, feeling his arms and legs throb from the cold. Sitting down once again by the fire, which had almost gone out by now, he decided not to go back to bed lest the cold disturb his wife. Instead he stayed up by the warm glow of the fire and since no one else was awake, spent some nice uninterrupted time in prayer.

After the wind and rain had subsided, the golden rays of the morning sun began to penetrate the melting clouds, entering through the windows into Samuel's house. He felt rested and got up straight away to see how the field had fared through the night. Behold his bewilderment at the devastation that met his eyes. Not one large plant was left untouched by the storm, some bent, some broke and many simply missing.

Save for the dripping scarecrow that stood watch over the once glorious cabbage patch, Samuel couldn't recognize anything else in the field that he once tilled. Great was the ruin of it. Not even a solid spot remained for the foot to step as almost everything was turned to mud.

And he fell to the wet ground on his knees and called out to God asking why such fate had befallen *him* —a man who had worked hard all his life— and why God didn't save him from this fate.

But God didn't answer him, and drooping his shoulders, the man stood up from the mud silently turning to the house. In his heart he knew God gave him a chance by waking him, but he wasted it choosing to return to sleep.

Eric also awoke at the sun light. He didn't even notice when he had dozed off. By now only warm embers remained of the fire. And he went out to find the fields even more wet and muddy than before. But, when he removed the tents, he was overjoyed to see that most of the plants had been preserved. And he praised the Father for waking him in time to save them.

When it came time to harvest, Samuel had little to show for the months of hard work it took to raise a crop. But Eric's care and effort were rewarded with a crop that twice exceeded the normal yield. He and his family were all really happy, but seeing his neighbor's distress, Eric gave him half the harvest.

God enjoyed this act of kindness and compassion and in time made Eric chief over both fields. Samuel continued to live there for many years to come, but only working as Eric's helper. Together through their efforts they magnified the yield by many fold. Thus in the end everything turned out for the better, even for Samuel who at the time ruined his families crop, but was now a great help in growing even larger harvests.