

A Christmas Story
John Henry Faulk
WRCoB 12.27.20

Today, I am not going to preach a sermon.

I am not going to expound on our selected Scripture Lesson.

I simply want to tell a story.

It is not my story.

It is a story that NPR has shared for many years.

It is from an audio recording
Of John Henry Faulk narrating one of his stories.

It is entitled, "Christmas Story".

John Henry Faulk was born to Methodist parents
On August 21, 1913, in Texas.

The fourth of five children
He attended the University of Texas.

For his master's thesis
He researched ten sermons
Preached in African-American churches

From these sermons, he gained insight
Into the inequity of civil rights for people of color.

He recorded Christmas Story in 1974
For a radio program called *Voices in the Wind*.

With the ongoing struggles against racism
In our country today

It is a heartwarming story
I'd like to share this 1st Sunday of Christmas.

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The day after Christmas
I was driving down a country road in Texas
And it was a bitter cold, cold morning.

And walking ahead of me on the gravel road
Was a little bare-footed boy.

I stopped and picked him up.
Looked like he was about 12 years old.

He was carrying an orange.
And he got in.

And he turned to me and says
"I'm-a going down the road about two miles to my cousins.
I want to show him my orange I got for Christmas."

~

I wasn't going to mention Christmas to him
Because I figured he came from a family . . .

Well, the kind that don't have Christmas.

But he brought it up himself. He said
"Did Christmastime come to you, Mister?"

And I said, "Yes. We had a real nice Christmas at our house
And you too?"

And with all sincerity, he said, "Mister
We had the wonderfulest Christmas in the United States!

"See, we never do have them out here much.

"We heared about it, but never did have one 'cause . . .
Well, you know, it's just . . .

Papa says that old Santi Claus
Was scared to bring his reindeer
Down in our section of the county.

Says, folks down here so hard up
They liable to catch one of his reindeer
And butcher him for meat.

~

But the day before Christmas

A lady come out from town
And she told all the families through here

Our family, too, that Christmas come to town
And if papa'd go in town
He could get some Christmastime for all of us.

Well papa hooked up the mule and wagon and went to town.

But he told us children, said
"Now don't ya'll get all worked up and excited
Cause there might not be nothing to this."

Ah . . . but, shucks,
He hadn't got out of sight up the lane
Till we was a-watching for him to come back.

We couldn't get our minds on nothing else.

And mama, she'd come to the door once in a while and say
"Now ya'll quit that looking up the lane
Cause papa told you there might not be nothing."

~

Long about the middle of the afternoon
We heared the team a-jangling harness a-coming
And we ran out in the front yard.

And Ernie, my little brother, called out and said

“Yonder come papa.”

And here come them mules in a big trot
And papa standing up in that wagon
Holding two big old chickens
All the feathers plucked off

And he was just a-yelling,
“Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas.”

And all us children just went a-swarming out there
Just a-crawling over that wagon and a-looking in.

And, Mister
I wish you could have seen what was in that wagon.

It's bags of stripety candy and apples and oranges
And sacks of flour and some real coffee
And just all tinselly and pretty,

We couldn't say nothing.
Just kind of held our breath and looked.

And papa standing there just waving them two chickens
A-yelling, “Merry Christmas to you.”
And a-laughing that big old grin on his face.

And mama
She come a-hurrying out with the baby in her arms.
And when she looked in that wagon, she just stopped.

And then papa, he dropped them two chickens
And grabbed the baby out of her arms
And held him up and said
“Merry Christmas to you, Santi Claus.”

And little ole Alvie Lee
He just laughed like he knowed it was Christmas, too.

And we was, all of us, just a-chattering and a-carrin' on
And all of a sudden, we heared papa call out
“Merry Christmas to you, Sam Jackson.”

And we stopped and looked.

And here comes Sam Jackson
A-leading that old cripple-legged mule of his up the lane.

And papa said
“Sam Jackson, did you get in town
To get some Christmas this year?”

And he shook his head and said
“Well, no, sir, Mister.”

"I heard about that
 But I didn't know it was for colored folks, too."
~
All of a sudden, none of us children were saying nothing.

Papa, he looked down at mama and mama looked up at him
 And they didn't say nothing
 Like they don't a heap of times

But they know'd what the other one's a-thinking.

And all of a sudden, papa, he broke out in a big grin.
 He said, "Dad-blame-it, Sam Jackson
 It's a sure a good thing you come by here.

"Lord have mercy, I liked to forgot.

"Christmastime would have me in court
 If he heard about this.

"The last thing he asked me is, if I lived out here near you.

Said he hadn't seen you around
 And said he wanted me to bring some of this
 Out to you and your family."

Well, sir, Sam Jackson, he broke out in a big grin.

Papa says, "I'll tell you what to do.
 You get your wife and children
 And you come down here tomorrow morning.

"It's going to be Christmastime all day long.
 Come early and stay late."
Sam Jackson said, "You reckon?"

And mama called out to him and said
 "Yes, and you tell your wife to be sure
 To bring some pots and pans

Cause we're going to have a heap of cookin' to do
 And I ain't sure I've got enough to take care of all of it."

Well, sir, old Sam Jackson
 He started off a-leading that mule up the lane in a full trot

And he a-heading home,
 To get the word to his folks.
~
And next morning, it just . . .
 You remember how it was yesterday morning,
 Just rosy red and looked just like Christmastime.

And us young'uns were all out of bed
 Before daylight seemed like
 Just running in the kitchen and smelling and looking.

And it was all there sure enough.

And here come Sam Jackson and his team
And his wife and his five young'uns in there.

The youn'uns all lookin' over the edge.
And we run out and yelled, "Merry Christmas."

And papa said, "Ya'll come on in."

And they come in.

And mama and Sister Jackson
They got in the kitchen
And they started a-cooking things up.

And us young'uns started playing
Running around and around the house
And just rolling in the dirt.

Then we started playing,
'Go Up To The Kitchen Door And Smell.'

We'd all run up and smell inside that kitchen door
Where mama and Sister Jackson was a-cooking at

And then we'd just die laughing and roll in the dirt.

~~

Papa and Sam Jackson—
They put a table up
Some boards over some sawhorses
And put some sheets over it.

And everybody had a place, even the baby.
And there was an apple and an orange
And some stripety candy at everybody's place.

And that was just dessert, see.
That wasn't the real Christmas dinner.

Papa, he sit at one end of the table
Sam Jackson he sit at the other.

And it was just a beautiful table like you never had seen.

And I didn't know nothing could ever look like that
And smell that good, you know.

And Sam Jackson, he's real black
And he had on that white clean shirt of his
And them overalls.

Everything had been washed and was real clean.

Papa, he said, "Brother Jackson
I believe you're a deacon in the church
Maybe you'd be willing to give grace."

Sam Jackson, he stood up
And his hands is real big, you know
And he kind of held onto the side of the table.

He looked up, paused
And smiled a great big smile, and said

“Lord, I hope you’re having
As nice a Christmas up there with your angels
As we’re having down here.

“Because it sure is Christmastime down here.
And I just wanted to say thank you, Lord.”

~

Like I say, Mister
I believe that was the wonderfulest Christmas
In the United States of America.

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What more can one say?

This simple story is the essence of Christmas.

Peace on earth and good will toward all.