



Lukas' Maiden Voyage

Gene Price

Jeffrey G. Collins, Illustrator

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With a protagonist who is meek but not truly weak and a clear message of faith overcoming adversity, the book expands on an important component of Christian faith.

Lukas' Maiden Voyage by Gene Price is a creative fable about the young donkey that Jesus rode on his way to be crucified. The story explores the Christian relationship with God and the importance of having faith in God's purpose for his worshipers.

Lukas is a young donkey with a bad leg, a weak back, and a blind eye. His father and twin brother died just after his birth, and he is picked on by the young Arabian stallions that share the stable he and his mother live in. Despite his many problems, he is kind and gentle. He dreams that someone will choose to ride him, allowing him to be of service to the stable and its owner. He also believes his greatest purpose is to serve God.

When Lukas is at last led from the stable and learns that he is to be ridden, he is certain that he won't be able to support the rider. He finds, however, that not only is the man on his back light as a feather, he can also communicate with him.

He speaks with the man about God's plan and leaves the encounter proud of his success and looking forward to hopefully seeing the man again, without realizing that he has just carried Jesus into Jerusalem where he will be crucified. A dream of the crucifixion, followed by a visit with the spirits of his father and grandfather, leads him to understand the honor that God has bestowed upon him. His first journey transforms his life dramatically.

The plot is fairly complex, with flashbacks in time and miraculous events and spiritual lessons layered into the mundane life Lukas lives. The choice to revisit such an important story from the Bible but to tell it from the perspective of a donkey is both creative and clever, as it expands the world Jesus would have inhabited in a manner that does not infringe upon biblical canon and that is also very palatable to kids.

The plot moves at a comfortable pace, following Lukas's daily activities. There is not a great deal of action; the plot is not difficult to follow, but the remarkable events of the story keep it interesting.

Lukas's mild personality is balanced by the bullying stallions Nimb and Obus, who are believably cocky and cruel, and the dynamic between Lukas and the horses is very honest and one that many children will recognize.

The text is accompanied by a series of illustrations by Jeffrey G. Collins. Most of these depict horses or donkeys and are beautifully and realistically rendered, though the few human figures are more cartoonish in appearance. The illustrations add visual interest and bring the animals in the stable to life.

Children who are interested in biblical stories will find *Lukas' Maiden Voyage* to be a creative and satisfying book. With a protagonist who is meek but not truly weak and a clear message of faith overcoming adversity, the book

expands on a very important component of Christian faith while sparking the imagination of its young audience.

CATHERINE THURESON (April 27, 2018)

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