There is an old, old story that I like to tell. It is a story about a dirty old man who used to live in a dirty old house away up on the side of a hill in a country far, far away. He was called a hermit because he didn’t like to be with people. He just liked to live all by himself. He ate as little food as he could so that he wouldn’t have to work more than he absolutely had to. He never swept his house, he never washed his clothes, and he never pulled the weeds from his garden. He just slept and slept, and sat and sat in the sunshine nearly all the time.

Down in the valley, there was a beautiful city where the good King of the country lived. But the dirty old hermit was content to live all by himself and only went to the city once in a while when it was necessary to sell a bundle of wood in order to buy something to eat.

One day, the dirty old man was sitting in the sunshine among the weeds, when he heard a horse coming up the path towards his house, “Cloppity, cloppity, cloppity, clop.” He looked and it was the King riding on his horse up the hill. He came closer and closer, then, he tied his horse to a post and walked towards the dirty old house. Then he stood looking over the valley at the majestic mountains on the other side.
“What a beautiful site,” said the King. “Aren’t those mountains beautiful?”

The dirty old hermit, having heard the King speak, turned to look at the mountains and the King saw him.

“Friend hermit,” he said, “may I come again to look at these majestic hills from your garden? The view from here is so grand it makes me very joyful.”

But the poor old hermit was so ashamed of his dirty old house and his dirty old garden that he couldn’t speak. He hung his head in shame. While he sat there wondering what to do, the King went away.

“But he will come again,” said the hermit to himself. “And I must get ready for him.” So he cleaned away the leaves and swept the path to his house. He repaired the old broken stool and placed it in front of his house. Then he waited for the King to come again.

One day he heard a horse coming up the hill, “Cloppity, cloppity, cloppity, clop.” It was the King riding on his horse up the hill. He came closer and closer, he tied his horse to the post, walked up and came and sat on the stool. He gazed and gazed over the valley at the beautiful mountains. Then he said, “Thank you. Thank you so much, friend hermit. I just love to come here. May I have a glass of water to drink?”

The hermit didn’t dare to tell the King that his cup was dirty, his bucket was empty, and his spring was muddy and overgrown with weeds. What could he do? In shame he ran to the spring to clean his cup, but when he got back, the King had gone away.

“But he will come again,” said the hermit to himself. “And I must get ready for him.” So the hermit cleaned the spring, he cleaned his cup,
and he put a little table beside the stool in front of his house. He brought fresh water in his bucket every day and kept it on the table. He waited for the King to come again.

Then one day he heard a horse coming up the hill again, “Cloppity, cloppity, cloppity, clop.” He looked and it was the King riding on his horse. He came closer and closer, he tied his horse to the post and walked towards the dirty old house. He sat on the stool and drank a cup of lovely water. Then he said, “Thank you. Thank you so much, friend hermit. I just love to come here and enjoy this beautiful view. It was so good of you to have lovely cool water all ready. I’m so hungry today. May I please have a little bread to eat?”

Poor old hermit! He had nothing to eat but a few half-rotten grapes and a dry crust or two of bread. He didn’t dare to offer them to the King. While he sat there wondering what to do, the King went away.

“But he will come again,” said the hermit to himself. “And I must get ready for him.”

So the hermit went into the forest, cut wood and sold it in the city. He bought some cornmeal and baked corncakes every day. Then he watered his garden and weeded his turnips and waited for the King to come again.

Then one day he heard a horse coming up the hill, “Cloppity, cloppity, cloppity, clop.” It was the King. He came and he sat on the stool and he drank the water and ate the corn cakes. Then he said, “Thank you. Thank you, friend hermit. I just love to come here and enjoy this beautiful view. It is so good of you to let me come and rest in your garden and refresh
myself with your food and your water.” Then he continued, “Friend her-
mit, I would like to sleep here tonight so that I can see the sun rise in the
morning.”

Sleep here? Poor old hermit! He didn’t dare to tell the King that he had
no bed and that he slept on some old bags on the floor. In shame he hung
his head and went inside his house wondering what he could do. While he
was there, the King went away.

“But he will come again,” said the hermit to himself. “And I must get
ready for him.”

So the hermit went into the forest, cut some poles and made a nice
bed. Then he cut some more poles and made a
nice veranda in front of his house. Then he
sold some more wood and bought a nice
mattress and a nice blanket. Then he no-
ticed how dirty his house was, so he swept
it and washed his windows. Then he no-
ticed how dirty his clothes were. So he sold
some more wood and bought some nice new clothes. Every day he swept
his house, weeded his garden, drew fresh water, baked corn cakes, bathed
himself, dressed himself in his nice new clothes, and waited for the King to
come again.

One day he heard a horse coming up the hill again, “Cloppity, cloppity,
cloppity, clop.” It was the King. The old hermit went to meet him. The
King came, sat on the stool, drank the water, and ate the corn cakes. He
also watched the sun set behind the beautiful mountains. Then he said,
“Thank you. Thank you so much, friend hermit. I just love to come here
and enjoy this beautiful view. It is so good of you to let me come and rest
in your garden, refresh myself with your food and water, and sit here and
look over the valley at those great, tall, strong mountains.”
Then the King slept in the nice new bed and stayed with the hermit all the night. He also watched the sun rise in the morning. And the old hermit was so happy, because the King sat with him, and talked with him, and stayed with him. And guess what? The people didn’t call the hermit the dirty old hermit anymore; they called him the friend of the King.

The story *The Hermit and the King* is an allegory. This means that it is a story that uses characters and events to represent other things, in this case, a spiritual principal. The hermit and the King is actually a story about us and God and the work that happens in us when we allow God into our lives. The King is symbolic of God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The hermit is you and I, or any other person in the world.

God comes knocking at our heart and slowly, ever so gently, His presence begins to show us what our lives are like. He begins to show us the dirt and grime that is in us and on us. Just like the hermit, the more we let God into our lives and see things the way He sees them, the more we clean up our souls and the more God and His light comes in. If we obey Him, we will be called the friends of the King for the Bible says in John 15:14, *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*