

## When Jesus Came to Laos-Part One

Thao stared at the empty pocket of dirt at his feet. Yesterday morning, he was sure he had spotted copper or gold or something valuable. What he found was an old metal shell, leftover from an old war. All through the years, it had not exploded. Until yesterday, when Thao had dug it up. Now instead of copper or gold, all he had to show for his work was an ugly, scabbing, swollen cheek.

A bush rustled nearby.

He sighed when he saw who it was.

“Find any gold, Thao? How about any treasure?”

Kham smiled and nudged his brother beside him.

“No,” Souph answered, “he just found a big hole.”

“What’s that on your face?” Kham asked. “We told you not to be poking around on our road.”

Thao turned from the boys and ran into the jungle. It wasn’t their road, any more than the jungle was his jungle. But Kham and Souph could tease for hours when they were bored. Anything he could find to do at home would be better than listening to them.

He threw the door open to the small bamboo hut and burst inside. His mother jumped to her feet and slid something under a blanket.

“Thao!”

“I’m sorry, Mother. I didn’t mean to scare you. What were you doing?”

His mother pulled the Bible out from under the blanket. When she looked back at Thao, her eyes were filled with tears.

“The pastor came this morning, and he brought his Bible for me. I sat down to read it for as long as I could.”

His mother reached out her hand and lightly touched the gash on Thao’s cheek.

“You need medicine. I fear your cheek is getting infected.”

Thao fought the urge to wince. “Don’t worry; I’ll be all right.”

A commotion outside the hut grabbed their attention. Someone pounded on the door. “Strangers are coming up the mountain!”