Tom buttoned the threadbare coat up to his chin and pulled an equally-worn cap down over his ears. Tossing a cheery word to his employer, he hurried out the back door of the busy corner grocery store to the waiting delivery truck and slid behind the wheel whistling softly to himself. Five more deliveries and he would be finished for the day. What a busy day it had been, he mused silently, remembering the packed aisles, the fast-emptying
shelves, the ever-present stream of continual chit-chat and friendly conversation among the customers and between employer-employees and the faithful customers.

Tom smiled as he backed the truck away from the door and turned into the little alley behind the store before getting onto Chestnut Street. For all its many years of standing on the same corner, with only two modernization jobs having been done on the building to up-date its structure and "face-lift" its appearance, The Golden Rule Grocery Store continued to show an annual up-swing in both financial gains and customers.

Tom felt he was favored to have been hired as one of Mr. Twining's employees. His work in the produce department was nothing less than sheer delight and pure enjoyment, and when Mr. Twining had asked him to do some home delivering on the side for him, he was overjoyed. It was as though his employer had said, "I trust you, Tom, that's why I'm asking you to make these deliveries." Everybody knew how carefully-chosen Mr. Twining's delivery boys were.

Again the young man smiled, and thanked God for his place of employment. The Twinings seemed like home folks, he thought. And Mr. Twining sold only the finest vegetables and fruits and the choicest meats. This, Tom was sure, accounted in part for the stability of the store and for its growth too.

By the light on the dashboard, he checked the house number of his first order. Weaverly Heights; that was out in the brand new subdivision, he reasoned mentally as he worked his way carefully through the heavy traffic of early evening. The snow which had begun falling in a lazy, nonchalant way shortly after the noon hour, was now coming out of the heavy over-cast clouds in almost blinding sheets, making the slick streets a glaring, almost blinding, hazard. Tom drove cautiously and prayerfully, knowing that the slightest carelessness could easily and effortlessly put him in a ditch or crash him into another vehicle.

He reached the edge of the city and turned down Willow Lane toward the new subdivision and was amazed at the depth of snow on the less-traveled roads. It lay thick and puffy and deep on Willow Lane road and was swirled up around fence . . . . . posts and trees in luscious looking creamy-marshmallow mounds and drifts. Tom sucked his breath in in an awe-inspired
gasp of amazement. Everything God made He made with beauty, he thought, watching carefully lest he miss the turn-off into Weaverly Heights.

He found the address of the house, and with strong arms he deftly carried the big, heavily-laden box to the door and pushed the bell. Soft, musical chimes played a nostalgic melody which he could hear from his place outside the door. He thought how nice it would be if he could buy his mother a doorbell that played a melody. She had told him once, long, long ago, about working for a woman whose doorbell played a beautiful but short melody and how it always lifted her spirits when she heard it. She confided to Tom, with laughter in her tired voice, that she had dubbed it her 'morale booster'.

Tom choked back the lump that came up in his throat, wanting more than anything else to do something extra nice for his mother for Christmas, but knowing that it was an almost impossible thing. Since the death of his father seven years ago, when he was only eleven years old, it had taken everything each of them could earn to keep the house from being taken away from them. He had raked and weeded lawns and gardens, mowed lawns, shoveled snow, run errands and done anything and everything legitimate that he could for almost so long as he could remember, it seemed, then turned his meager, boyish earnings over to his mother. She, in turn, helped him count out his tithes and offerings then used what was left for their daily needs by adding it to her earnings from washings, ironings, and sewing and baking.

But they had been happy, the two of them, Tom mused; and since his graduation from high school and his God-given job with Mr. Twining, things had been made better and easier for his mother: She no longer took in washings and ironings, and only for special occasions did she ever bake for others anymore. She insisted, however, in continuing to sew for others, declaring that it was a good outlet for her energy as well as a source of home income for her.

The door opened and Tom pushed his own thoughts to the back of his mind while he greeted the stately, tall, arrow-straight, silver-haired man standing in the doorway with a warm smile and a cheery, "Your order, Mr. Wadsworth. Your Thanksgiving order from Mr. Twining's Golden Rule Grocery Store. But hadn't I better bring it around to the back door? My boots have quite a bit of snow on them."
A softly-sweet feminine voice from the hallway said, "Bring the box in, my boy; snow's clean. I can always mop the puddles."

Tom set the box on the porch and quickly removed his boots. Then, just as quickly, he picked the box up and followed the man through the spacious house into the kitchen and deposited the order on a mammoth butcher block portable table near the refrigerator. He couldn't possibly have tracked snow into the house; his mother had taught him better than that.

"Thank you, Son," the man said kindly, pressing a bill into the palm of Tom's hand. "A tip for you," he added.

"Thank you, Sir. Thank you!" Tom exclaimed, blinking back the tears that came suddenly into his eyes. "May God give you a wonderful and blessed Thanksgiving. Your children will be home?" he asked quickly.

"All of them!" the woman answered joyously, coming into the kitchen and standing beside her husband. "We are so blest!" she added. "So very blest; all seven of our children and their families, home for Thanksgiving!"

"God is good," Tom declared.

"Yes, good!" the couple exclaimed.

"Well, I must be on my way, folks," Tom said pleasantly. "A happy Thanksgiving to you."

Once outside, Tom noticed how much deeper the snow was now than when he had first stepped on to the Wadsworth's porch. And it was drifting badly too. He must keep moving, he decided. Four more stops, and not one customer must be disappointed. A turkey was in each order, he was sure, and perhaps a ham too.

As he drove away from the new subdivision, Tom thought of the Thanksgiving he and his mother would share. There would be no turkey, to be sure. But a plump chicken, stuffed with his mother's delicious oyster stuffing, would be fare fit for a king, he decided. He had hoped he'd be able to buy a small hen turkey for them but discovered that the money was needed for a new furnace instead. Every single penny and dime he could scrape together, it would take. He sighed, then thanked God for chicken and
drove on. Someday, God willing, he would buy a turkey for that wonderful little mother of his! Yes indeed, he would.

Tom delivered three of the four grocery orders and was in the process of carrying the fourth from the delivery truck when he saw a sack in the far corner of the truck. A quick glance in the almost-hidden bag revealed a large, plump turkey; one of Mr. Twining's finest birds sold. Tom gasped. How did the turkey get into the delivery truck? he wondered. Who put it there?

He made his way to the front of the truck and picked up the delivery sheet. Five deliveries only were listed. He turned the sheet over to see if a lone turkey was, perhaps, listed for delivery on the back side but the paper was blank and bare. No order for a turkey anywhere. It was strange; yes, very, very strange.

Tom felt dazed and puzzled. Had someone from the store taken the bird and hidden it inside the truck until closing time, when he/she planned to spirit it out of the delivery truck into their own car and have a Thanksgiving feast at another man's expense? How wicked! he thought. How wicked and sinful! Rather a thousand times to eat beans and cornbread for Thanksgiving than to feast on a stolen turkey, he soliloquized silently.

Grabbing the enormous box of groceries and heaving it upward, Tom hurried to the door of the last delivery stop. He must get back to the store before Mr. Twining left, and tell him about the turkey, he decided, giving a friendly greeting to the woman who opened the door for him and following her into the kitchen with his heavy load.

Like each of the others where he had stopped, the woman pressed a tip into Tom's cold hand. He thanked her profusely and wished her a blessed Thanksgiving then hurried away, eager to see his employer before he left the store. Suppose the turkey was on order and was not listed on the delivery sheet due to an oversight, haste, or some such thing, then what? If that was the case, someone would be disappointed if he failed to deliver what they had paid for. This would hurt Mr. Twining's business, he knew, and this must never happen.

Tom pulled the truck into its parking place at the back of the store just as he saw the main lights go out inside. Running to the front of the store, he began knocking on the doors, calling, "Mr. Twining! Mr. Twining! "
The big lights inside the store were turned on again and Mr. Twining, unlocking the doors and letting Tom inside, exclaimed, "Why Tom, what's wrong with you?"

"It's about a turkey, Mr. Twining. A big turkey. One of your finest. It's in a sack in the far end of the delivery truck's one corner. I have no idea who put it there nor how it got there. Was it to be delivered to someone, do you know? It wasn't listed on the delivery sheet."

"No. No, I had no order for a single turkey to be delivered to anyone tonight, Tom."

"Then how did it get into the truck? I mean, well, who would have done such a sneaky thing? I don't want to believe anyone would have been trying to steal, but how do you explain the turkey? I know Miles wouldn't do such a thing when he loads the groceries into the truck. But who?"

Locking the door behind Tom, Mr. Twining said, "Come back into my office, Tom. I'd like to talk to you before you leave for home tonight. How about a dish of ice cream? I was just going after some for myself when you set up that horrible racket knocking on the door." He laughed when he said the last sentence.

"I'm sorry if I frightened you, Mr. Twining, but I was worried that someone wouldn't get their turkey for Thanksgiving. By the way, hadn't I better go out and bring it into the store and put it into one of the freezers?"

Scooping big scoops of creamy ice cream into two bowls, Mr. Twining said, "Forget about the turkey for the time being, Tom, and eat your ice cream. You've worked like a beaver today; you deserve a treat. Care for anything else?" he asked congenially. "We have the entire store at our disposal."

"Thanks, Mr. Twining, but this ice cream's all I care for. It's a real treat; a most delicious treat! Thanks much."

Taking a bite of the ice cream and letting it melt on his tongue, the store owner said, "Tom, I may as well level with you now: I put that turkey in the delivery truck. "
"You did? Why? I mean . . . well, if it wasn't a delivery order I . . ."

Mr. Twining smiled. "I was checking your honesty out. It's that simple. Checking, to see if you'd return the apparently unaccounted-for bird to me or if you'd keep it for yourself, like one of my other delivery boys did a year ago. He thought no one would know about the turkey since it wasn't on the delivery sheet, and he must have decided that I would never have missed one single bird either. At any rate, I let him go -- dismissed him from my employ ' right after that."

"Why Mr. Twining, I couldn't possibly have kept that turkey; I am a Christian. My Bible tells me that I am to 'walk honestly.'"

"But you are not a wealthy young man, Tom; were you not tempted to keep the turkey?"

Sitting on the edge of his seat, Tom said, "No, Mr. Twining. NO! Mother and I would rather have a Thanksgiving consisting of nothing more than dry bread and water than to feast on stolen turkey."

A pleased smile parted the man's lips. "I know that, Tom. I knew it all the time. Now that you have passed the final test . . . and with flying colors, I might add . . . how would you like to become my assistant manager?"

Tom gasped. "I am honored," he said humbly. "But I know so little about store management, Mr. Twining."

"I will teach you all you need to know. You will work closely to me until you have learned the business. I need a man on whom I can depend, Tom, and you are that young man . . . dependable, honest and upright. The load's getting too heavy for me; what do you think?"

"By God's grace and with your help, I'll do my very best, Mr. Twining: I accept your offer. Thank you kindly. You've been a truly great man to work for and I've enjoyed every minute here. This turkey deal was a bit frustrating though."
Mr. Twining laughed. "I didn't mean for it to be frustrating for you Tom, just a 'proving ground' for your honesty and uprightness. Oh, by the way, the turkey's for your Thanksgiving table."

"I'll pay you for it," Tom replied quickly. "Some way, I'll pay you for it, Mr. Twining. That's one of your finest brands."

"One never pays for a gift, Tom. Never! The turkey is a very special Thanksgiving gift from Mrs. Twining and me. And, oh yes, when you leave for home, you'll find a box of groceries on the back seat of your car. I want you and your mother to have as wonderful a Thanksgiving Day as Mrs. Twining and I'll be having and enjoying with our children and their families."

Tom was speechless for a while. Then, getting to his feet, he said hoarsely, "May God bless you, Mr. Twining. Yes, may God bless you richly and abundantly. Thank you, kind Sir. From the very bottom of my mother's heart, and mine, thank you. And now I must be getting home."

"Don't forget to put the turkey into that grocery box on your back seat," Mr. Twining called after Tom. "And thanks for leading me out of the darkness of sinful night into the beautiful Light of salvation. This Thanksgiving my life has a new dimension; a spiritual depth to it. Thanks to you."

Locking the delivery truck and putting the turkey inside his car, Tom bowed his head over the steering wheel and offered a prayer of praise and Thanksgiving to God for His many blessings to him and his mother. It would be the most bountiful Thanksgiving he could ever remember; a very special Thanksgiving Day. And all because God had saved and sanctified him and had enabled him to 'walk honestly'.