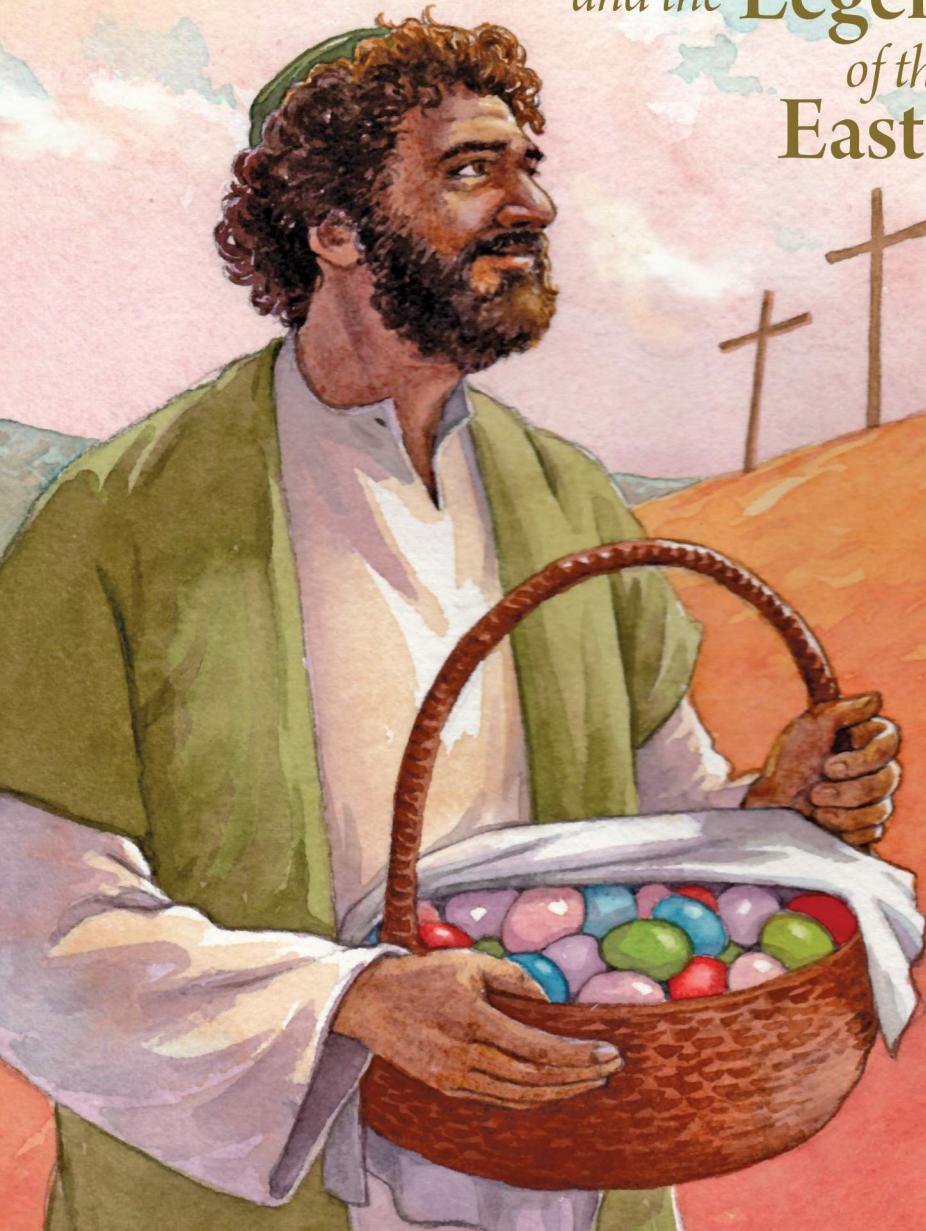


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Easter Egg



Written by  
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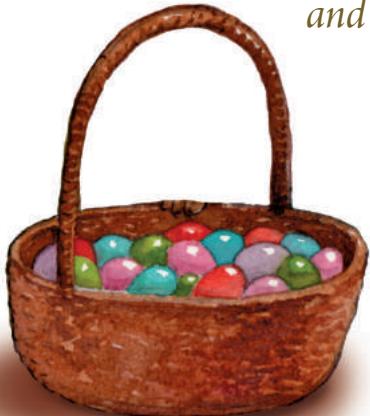






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To my parents,  
Richard and Kathleen Longenecker,  
who taught by action how to reach out to others  
just as Simon did.



*They compelled a passerby,  
who was coming in from the country to carry his cross;  
it was Simon of Cyrene,  
the father of Alexander and Rufus.*

*Mark 15:21*







“Pray our eggs bring a good price at market,”  
Simon said to his wife, Ruth.

“Lord knows we need the money. I’m sure you will  
find buyers,” Ruth answered. “Many people will be in  
Jerusalem for the Passover feast.”

Simon hugged his two sons, Alexander and Rufus,  
goodbye. “Help your mother while I’m gone.” Simon  
took his basket of eggs wrapped in cloth and began  
the long walk toward the city.



As he entered Jerusalem, Simon heard a crowd shouting angrily. People lined both sides of the road. Simon came closer and saw a man dragging a cross. People in the crowd spit and threw stones at the man as he stumbled.

“What has this man done?” Simon wondered aloud.



A young man standing next to him overheard Simon. “His name is Jesus, and he’s done nothing to deserve this,” the man explained. “Jesus is the Messiah.”

“I’ve heard people speak about him,” Simon responded after introducing himself. “You think he’s the savior God promised to send?”

“I’m John. I’ve followed Jesus for the last three years. I have seen the miracles he’s worked. He is not a criminal!” John said. “But now, they are going to kill him—”



Two hands gripped Simon's shoulders from behind. "He's already fallen once, and this is taking too long. *You* carry the cross for him!" a Roman soldier yelled.



Simon had just enough time to hand his basket to John before the soldier shoved him forward.

*I'm afraid of these soldiers, but John said Jesus is innocent,* Simon thought. He had heard about Jesus, the rabbi from Nazareth who always reached out to help people. Simon looked at Jesus' crown of thorns. Blood and sweat soaked his tunic. Jesus was suffering greatly. This man, who had helped so many people, now needed help. Moved by compassion, Simon prayed quietly as he neared Jesus. "God, help me to help Jesus like he's helped so many other people."





Simon gently lifted the cross off Jesus' shoulders and said, "I'll help you as much as I can." Then Simon began following Jesus up the hill.