

# What a Friend We Have in Jesus

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”

Matthew 5:44 (NIV)

**H**is name was Joseph Scriven and he was born in Ireland September 10, 1819. As a young man he studied at Trinity College Dublin and graduated with his B.A. in 1842, the same day his brother William graduated in medicine. His father was a soldier, mathematician and carpenter. His mother was a musician and read poetry to her children when they were young.

Joseph, as a young man was engaged to be married but his fiancé drowned the day prior to the wedding in 1843.

Heartbroken he finally emigrated to Canada and was tutor to the children of various families. He settled in Port Hope area on the north shore of Lake Ontario. He met a young lady Elisa Catherine Roche. He was 39, she was 22 and they became engaged. She took ill and died before the wedding on August 6, 1860.

Scriven was associated with the evangelical Christians called Christian Brethren. He did some preaching in their Gospel Halls and also on street corners or wherever he might find a group of people.

His kind hearted manner was usually welcome by the neighbours where he lived. He would volunteer to chop the needed wood for those who could not do it for themselves. If payment was offered he would always refuse.

Scriven often attended the local pubs in Port Hope on Saturday evening when men would come out drunk to stagger home. He passed out tracts talking about Jesus to anyone who would take them.

One evening three men coming out of a tavern decided to beat him up. After leaving him bleeding on the ground they walked away laughing at their efforts with the religious man. As Scriven watched them depart he noticed one of them was without a coat to protect him from the cold night air. Quickly he got up, ran to the man without a coat and gave his own coat to the man who had beaten him a few moments earlier.

Joseph was known to write poems from time to time. On the death of his fiancé Elisa he wrote a beautiful piece concerning her place in heaven with Jesus. On another oc-

casional he wrote the hymn we now know as, What a Friend we have in Jesus. Scriven never intended it to become the remarkably successful hymn that it quickly became. He only intended it for his mother and a few friends who were suffering.

Scriven was a wonderful example of the words of his most famous hymn. He led a tragic life and died under strange circumstances. However his words live on for those who suffer as he encouraged us to take all of our sorrows and distress to the ever loving Jesus.

Have we trials or temptations? Is there trouble anywhere? We should never be discouraged, take it to the Lord in prayer.

Can we find a friend so faithful, who will all our sorrows share? Jesus knows our every weakness, take it to the Lord in prayer.

Jesus is the greatest, most helpful Friend any of us can have. Come to Him today and be friends with Him.

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