

Mistletoe Hunt

By David Dickson

Church Magazines
(Based on a true story)

"Have a very merry Christmas! Scatter gladness ev'rywhere"
(Children's Songbook, 51).

Dave hurried up the last stretch of the grassy hill. Another gust of cold December wind brushed past him, but he didn't mind. The oak tree at the top of the steep hill just *had* to have some mistletoe in its branches. He had a big Christmas surprise to pull off! And he needed to collect lots of mistletoe to do it.

But his pillowcase wasn't even half full yet, and he'd been out hiking the hills with Dad all morning.

"Do you see any?" Dad asked from behind him on the trail.

Dave ran to the oak tree and peered up into its branches. There were no leaves this time of year, which made it easy to see that the branches were completely bare. There was no mistletoe growing in this tree.

"No mistletoe," Dave said. He slumped down against the tree and sighed. This was taking forever! He thought mistletoe would be easier to find.

"Too bad," Dad said. But then he smiled. "At least we're up here in this clean air, enjoying some great exercise."

"Yeah, I guess so," Dave said. Then he looked around. Green hills covered with nothing but grass and trees spread out in all directions. "Whoa! This view is awesome. Look! There's the lake! I can't believe we can see it this far away."

Dad faced the direction of the lake. "You're right! What a beautiful day to be outside."

Dad eyed Dave's pillowcase. "How are you holding up? Should we call it a day, or do you want to keep searching? You already have more mistletoe than I've ever seen in one place before."

There was no question in Dave's mind. He had something special planned for Mom and Dad. He needed to fill his pillowcase to the very top. "I want to keep going."

Dad laughed and stretched his arms over his head. "This secret project of yours must be pretty special. All right. I love a good hike. Where do you want to try next?"

Dave spun in a slow circle. "How about that group of trees?" he said, pointing to the next big hill over. It would probably take them another hour to reach those trees, but there were a whole bunch of them together. He never would have noticed if they hadn't climbed this huge hill.

"Sounds great to me," Dad said. "If we get a move on, I'll bet we can get there in time to eat lunch."

They talked and laughed as they climbed down one hill and up the next. Dave loved going on adventures like this with Dad. Even the hike up the next hill didn't seem so hard.

"You know, I think those trees have some extra shadows in their branches," Dad said as they got closer. "This might be your lucky hill."

Dave ran the last stretch again. Before he even reached the trees, he knew they'd hit the jackpot. "Yes!" he yelled. "We did it!" The limbs were full of mistletoe. He climbed a tree and started clipping mistletoe off the branches. Moving on to the next tree he continued filling his pillowcase while Dad got their lunches out.

"Congratulations," Dad said as he handed Dave a peanut butter sandwich. "I have no clue what you have planned for all that stuff, but you sure have a lot of it!"

Two weeks later, Dave grinned as he wrapped the special Christmas presents he'd picked out for Mom and Dad—presents he'd paid for by selling mistletoe to Christmas shoppers at the mall. He'd planned this for months.

"Mission accomplished," Dave said. Not only had he and Dad enjoyed a super fun adventure, now Dave couldn't wait to see Mom and Dad's faces Christmas morning! He loved making them smile. ♦

Dave had big plans for Christmas gifts this year.

I can't wait to give you your Christmas gift!

I'm making yours. You'll love it!

ILLUSTRATION BY MIKE DAMMER