

**Ephesians 3:14 - 21** <sup>14</sup> For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, <sup>15</sup> from whom every family <sup>1</sup> in heaven and on earth takes its name. <sup>16</sup> I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, <sup>17</sup> and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. <sup>18</sup> I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the width and length and height and depth, <sup>19</sup> and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. <sup>20</sup> Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, <sup>21</sup> to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

### **“An African Tale”**

Many years ago, there lived a young man in what is now Tanzania. His name was Ujiji and his people were one of the many Bantu tribes hunting the great plains that lie between Mt. Kilimanjaro and Lake Tanganyika. Now, Ujiji was a very bright young man and would one day be a very skilled hunter. You see, his people relied on the men’s ability to hunt the antelope feeding on the plain. The antelope were plentiful and Ujiji’s people killed only what they could eat. When the hunters killed an animal they would ask the animal’s forgiveness for taking its life and commend it for its abilities to get away from them.

When the hunters returned, Ujiji’s whole family would have a great celebration. They would dance to the rhythmic beat of the drums through which they believed the heart beat of the earth sounded and they would thank the one great God for their fruitful hunt. Ujiji’s people also thanked their ancestors who had gone to live with the great God for being with them during the hunt and protecting them from danger.

Ujiji greatly enjoyed these feasts for they meant his belly would not growl for several days. You see, he was not fond of the roots his mother and sisters gathered. Ujiji was too young to hunt, but he dreamed of the day that he could wander outside the boundaries of the camp with his father, uncles, and brothers. But, it was not the hunting that excited him so. He desired more than anything to see the rest of the one great God’s good creation which lay beyond the boundaries of their village. He had heard of a very long and deep lake to the west and a high mountain to the north. Ujiji wanted so much to see these places.

Since Ujiji was a very bright young man, he wanted to know all there was to know about this good creation that the great God had given to his people. So, he went to see Mudara, the prophet. Mudara would know. Now, Mudara was a funny man. He always dressed so colorfully and liked to smear berry juice paint all over his face. Mudara would always sit in his tent shaking gourds and chanting, “Kumba yah yah. Kumba yah yah.” Ujiji cautiously approached Mudara.

“What you know, boy?” Mudara shrieked.

Ujiji jumped and muttered out, “O wise Mudara. I, I want to know all. I, I want to know the width and length and height and depth.”

Mudara pointed his finger at the frightened little boy and said, “Wait little one. It no yet time. We know.” Mudara resumed chanting, “Kumba yah yah. Kumba yah yah.” Well, Ujiji did not understand Mudara’s answer and thought in his heart that Mudara was an old fool as did everybody else in the village. So, Ujiji set out on his own to find what is the width and length and height and depth.

Ujiji wandered and wandered and finally came to the great lake which he had longed to see. It was very wide and very long. Ujiji thought to himself, “Is this all that there is to the width and length in the great God’s good creation?” He sat on a rock at the edge of the lake under a tree and rested. Ujiji looked up and saw a sparrow singing in the tree. In the sparrow’s singing Ujiji heard the sparrow ask, “What would you know? What would you know?” Ujiji was very hungry and thirsty and thought it odd that the sparrow should speak, but the bird continued to sing, “What would you know? What would you know?”

Finally, Ujiji decided to answer the sparrow. “Who are you?”

To his amazement the bird answered, “I am Songura, the sparrow. What would you know?”

“I wish to know all.” Ujiji answered. “I want to know what is the width and length and height and depth.”

Songura began to sing, “In the cool months I fly north and in the warm months I fly south. I fly east for food and west for water. As to width and length, the great God’s good creation has no end as far as I can tell, but you must continue to seek what you would know. We know it will not be long.”

Ujiji was disappointed and confused by the sparrow’s song. Just then, he looked away to the north and saw the great mountain. Ujiji said, “I must climb that mountain and from there I will know the height of the great God’s good creation.”

Days later Ujiji arrived at the mountain and began to climb it. Several days passed and he reached the frozen top of the mountain. He looked around and from there he could see north and south and east and west. Ujiji knew that Songura, the sparrow, had not lied. In the one good God’s creation, width and length could not be known. They are without end, beautiful, and vast.

Just then the mountain began to rumble and it said to Ujiji, “What would you know? What would you know?”

Ujiji was startled. But after speaking to a sparrow, talking to a mountain did not seem strange. “Who are you?” He asked.

The mountain rumbled, “I am Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in all of Africa. What would you know?”

“I wish to know all.” Ujiji began. “I want to know what is the width and length and height and depth. Songura, the sparrow, said the great God’s good creation had no end in width and length. From this height, I can now see she was right. Can I know height to it’s end?”

Kilimanjaro began to teach. “I am a mountain, one of the highest in all the good God’s creation. There are but a few mountains higher than I, and yet not a one of us can reach the end of height. It, too, is endless. Yet, you continue to find what you would know for we know the time is soon.”

Ujiji came down from the mountain. The hugeness of the great God's creation filled Ujiji with wonder at how huge the one good God must be. He marveled at the great God and he began to think, “If width and length and height are endless, then beyond that must be where the great God lives.” Ujiji had yet to explore depth and he hoped that maybe he could find the great God's house by going deep into the earth to the ends of depth. There was only one place Ujiji knew in which he could attempt this.

So, Ujiji returned home and went to the burial cave of his ancestors. Deeper and deeper he went into the cave until he came to the end and faced a wall of rock. There, Ujiji found the bones of Mbamu, the first great chief of his people. Suddenly, the bones began to rattle and Mbamu sat up. But, Ujiji was not afraid for his people believed that seeing the ghosts ancestors and hearing them speak meant that the great God found favor with you.

“Ujiji,” creaked Mbamu. “Ujiji, what do you know?”

“Great Mbamu,” Ujiji began. “I set out to learn all. I set out to learn what is the width and length and height and depth. I discovered that the great God's creation has no end to width and length and height. So, I thought that the great God must live beyond these places. I am a fool. I hoped that if I went deep enough into the earth, then there beyond the deepness of depth I would find the great God's home. All I have found is this stone wall. What is beyond it I can not tell. It appears that there is no end to the depth of the creation either.”

“Ujiji,” rattled Mbamu. “Ujiji, you are wise to know that you can not know all. You must go now on a long journey for we know the time has come.”

So, Ujiji left the cave, went home, and packed for a long journey. He said good-bye to his people, returned to the great lake, and built a boat. At the end of the lake was a great river which flowed on and on. Ujiji passed a great kingdom with pyramids and floated out onto a vast sea. A wind began to blow him eastward until he came to shore. There, Ujiji met some people who were walking to a city on a hill called Yerusalaim to worship at the temple of the God of all creation and so he walked with them.

Ujiji found himself in a great city on a high hill with walls all around it. He'd never seen anything like this before. “How great this people must be,” he thought to himself. But suddenly, a great storm began to cover the city and people were crying loudly. Just then just outside of the city Ujiji saw...Ujiji saw...Ujiji saw something unimaginable. Three men were hanging on poles, dying. Ujiji was horrified. He had seen lions kill their food, but never had he seen humans do this to their own kind.

Then Ujiji saw a man wearing shiny clothing, carrying a great weapon, and sitting on the ground weeping. Ujiji asked the man, “What has happened here? Why have you done this to your own kind?”

“The one in the middle,” the man answered. “He was Jesus of Nazareth and surely he was Son of God. He would have been king of this people, a kind and just king. He loved children and healed people, but his people did not want him for king. So, we killed him. That man should have been king of the whole world, but we killed him.”

Ujiji did not like this place and did not want to see any more of it. Ujiji went home; back to the great sea, back to great river. On the way Ujiji thought about what he had come to know. He now knew that the width and length and height and depth of creation was endless and could not be known. Mbamu said that it was wise to know that you could not know all. From the top of the mountain Ujiji had seen that the great God's creation is very beautiful and he knew that the great God must love his people very much to have given them such a wonderful place to live in. Ujiji grew troubled. He saw that the great God had shown a greater love to those people in Yerusalaim by sending his own son to be their king. Ujiji could not understand why anyone would kill the son of the great God. Ujiji cried out for all creation to hear, “How could they be such fools?”

As Ujiji's lips formed the word fools, he thought of Mudara the prophet and how in his heart he had called Mudara a fool and how his people called Mudara a fool. Suddenly, he knew in his heart that calling Mudara a fool was as bad as killing the son of the great God. Ujiji knew that he was not worthy the love of the great God. He was not worthy to live in the good creation. Ujiji wept.

When Ujiji reached home he ran to see Mudara, but Mudara was no longer chanting, “Kumba yah yah. Kumba yah yah.” Mudara was now staring intently to the north with hands cupped around his ear trying to hear something. As Ujiji stepped up behind Mudara, Mudara startled him, “What you know, boy?”

Ujiji began to tell Mudara how he had learned that he could not know all. How he had learned that the great God must love his people very much for giving them such a beautiful and vast home. Ujiji told him how the people in Yerusalaim had received the greatest gift of all, the son of the great God to be their king. The great God had sent his son to be their king, but they killed him with much cruelty like the lion kills its food. Ujiji said, “I thought these people very foolish.” Ujiji lowered his head and his face and heart sank and he said, “I too have killed the son of the great God. In my heart I have called you a fool. Wise Mudara, please forgive me.”

Mudara grabbed Ujiji's chin and raised it. “Now, we know.” Mudara praised. “Now, we know.” “Listen boy. You hear.” Mudara poked Ujiji in the chest, cupped his hands over his ears, and stared deep into Ujiji. “You see, boy. You know dah width and dah length and dah height and dah depth o' dah love o' great God.” Mudara grabbed Ujiji's hands and they danced and leaped and leaped and danced.