*Every Man Heart Lay Down* is a traditional story that comes out of the country of Liberia in Africa. The story developed in the time when Christian missionaries first went to Liberia and began to teach the African people about the Christian faith. As the people picked up on the Christian stories, they blended these stories with their own unique African understandings and culture. Out of this effort they developed a Christian Gospel that spoke powerfully to the Liberian people. The version told here is based on a children’s book, no longer in print, by the same name. The book was written by Lorenz Graham.

There are a few words in this story that are uniquely African in origin. They include **“Palaver”** and **“Pican.”** Palaver can take on a variety of meanings from "argument" to "business" to "trouble" to “judgement”. In our day, a “palaver house” might be a courthouse — where we take our argument, or business, to be resolved. A pican is simply an affectionate name for a loved small child.

~Warren Lynn

Every Man Heart Lay Down

by Lorenz Graham

Long time past

Before you papa live

Before him papa live

Before him pa’s papa live--

Long time past

Before them big tree live

Before them big tree’s papa live--

That time, God live

And God look down on the world

What he done make

And him heart no lay down.

And He walk about in the town

To see the people

And he sit down in the Palaver house

To know the people

And he vex too much.

**-1-**

And God say,

*“Nev’ mind.*

*The people no hear My Word*

*The people no walk My way*

*Nev’ mind.*

*“I going break the world and lose the people.*

*I going make the day dark*

*And the night I going make hot.*

*“I going make the water that side where land belong*

*And land that side where water belong.*

*And I going make a new country*

*And make a new people.”*

Now this time

God’s one small boy –Him small pican– hear God’s Word

And the pican grieve for the people

So he go fore God’s face

And make talk for him Pa.

*“Pa, I come for beg You.”*

*so he say*

*“I come for beg You.*

*Don’t break the world*

*What You done make.*

*Don’t lose the people*

*What you done care for.*

*I beg you.*

**-2-**

*“Make it I go*

*I talk to people*

*I walk with people*

*Bye-m-bye they savvy the way.”*

And the pican go down softly,

softly

And hold God’s foot.

So God look on Him small boy

And Him heart be soft again

And God say

*“Aye, My son,*

*When you beg me so*

*I no can vex.*

*“Left me now, but hear me good:*

*If you go you must be born like a man*

*And you must live like a man*

*And you must have hurt and have hunger.*

*“And hear me good:*

*Men will hate you*

*And they will flog you*

*And bye-m-bye they will kill you*

*And I no going put My hand there.”*

And the pican say

*“I agree!”*

**-3-**

And bye-m-bye God call Mary

To be ma for the pican

Now Mary be new wife for Joseph

And Joseph ain’t touch Mary self

so first time Joseph vex

But God say

*“Nev mind, Joseph.*

*This be God palaver.”*

And Joseph heart lay down.

And God see one king who try for do good

For all him people

And God say

*“Ahah! Now I send My son*

*For be new king.”*

And God send star to call the king.

And in a far country

God hear a wise man call Him name

And God say to the wise man

*“I send My son for be new wise man,*

*Go now with the star.”*

And the star call

And the wise man follow.

And by the waterside

Men lay down for take rest

And they hear fine music in the sky

Like all the stars make song,

And they fear.

**-4-**

And all the dark make bright like day

And the water shine like fire

And no man can savvy

And they hearts turn over!

But God’s angel come

And God’s angel say

*“Make glad, all people,*

*God’s pican be born in Bethlehem.”*

And the people say, *“Oh!”*

And the wise man and the king

And the country people come to Bethlehem

And the star come low and stop.

But when they go for mansion house

The star no be there.

And when they go for Big Man’s house

The star no be there!

And bye-m-bye when they go for hotel

The star no be there gain --

But the wise man say

*“Ahah, the star be by the small house*

*Where cattle sleep!”*

And it was so

**-5-**

And they find Joseph and Mary

And the small, small pican

Fold up in country cloth

And the king bring gold for gift

And the wise man bring fine oil

And the country people bring new rice.

And they look on the God pican

And every man heart lay down.

**-6-**