

# *A Theft of Bread*

*Les Miserables* (literally “The Miserable Ones”) is an 1862 French novel by author Victor Hugo, and is widely considered one of the greatest novels of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It follows the lives and interactions of several French characters over a 17-year period in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, starting in 1815 and culminating in the 1832 June Rebellion.

The novel focuses on the struggles of ex-convict Jean Valjean and his experience of redemption. It examines the nature of law and grace, and expounds upon the history of France, architecture of Paris, politics, moral philosophy, antimonarchism, justice, religion, and the types and nature of romantic and familial love. The story is historical fiction because it contains factual and historical events.

In the novel, Valjean’s only crime was the theft of a loaf of bread to feed his sister’s starving children. After serving 19 years, he was released from prison.

Unable to find work because he had been a convict, Valjean came to the home of a good old bishop who graciously gave him his supper and a bed for the night.

Yielding to temptation, he stole the bishop’s silver plates and slipped out, but was soon caught and returned.

The benevolent bishop told the police, “Why, I gave them to him. And Jean, you forgot to take the candlesticks.”



Valjean was astounded at such kindness, and this brought about his salvation. A little deed of kindness can turn a sinner to the Savior.

Every day, in the work of Life Care, Century Park and Life Care at Home, associates demonstrate their compassion for the residents we serve, and activate the power of mercy and grace.

– Beecher Hunter