

Faith Kindness Love and Joy

*I expect to pass through this life but once.
If, therefore there can be any kindness I can show or any good thing I can do
for any fellow being let me do it now...
Let me not defer it, or neglect it,
For I shall not pass this way again.*

Stephen Grellet

Galatians 5:22

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith,

Daniel's Gloves

I sat, with two friends, in the picture window of a quaint restaurant just off the corner of the town-square. The food and the company were both especially good that day.

As we talked, my attention was drawn outside, across the street. There, walking into town, was a man who appeared to be carrying all his worldly goods on his back. He was carrying, a well-worn sign that read, 'I will work for food.' My heart sank.

We continued with our meal, but his image lingered in my mind. We finished our meal and went our separate ways. I had errands to do and quickly set out to accomplish them. I glanced toward the town square, looking somewhat halfheartedly for the strange visitor. I was fearful, knowing that seeing him again would call some response. I drove through town and saw nothing of him. I made some purchases at a store and got back in my car.

Deep within me, the Spirit of God kept speaking to me: 'Don't go back to the office until you've at least driven once more around the square.'

Then with some hesitancy, I headed back into town. As I turned the square's third corner, I saw him. He was standing on the steps of the church, going through his sack.

I stopped and looked; feeling both compelled to speak to him, yet wanting to drive on. The empty parking space on the corner seemed to be a sign from God: an invitation to park. I pulled in, got out and approached the town's newest visitor.

'Looking for the pastor?' I asked.

'Not really,' he replied, 'just resting.'

'Have you eaten today?'

'Oh, I ate something early this morning.'

'Would you like to have lunch with me?'

'Do you have some work I could do for you?'

'No work,' I replied 'I commute here to work from the city, but I would like to take

you to lunch.'

'Sure,' he replied with a smile.

As he began to gather his things, I asked some surface questions. Where you headed?'

St. Louis '

'Where you from?'

'Oh, all over; mostly Florida ..'

'How long you been walking?'

'Fourteen years,' came the reply.

I knew I had met someone unusual. We sat across from each other in the same restaurant I had left earlier. His face was weathered slightly beyond his 38 years. His eyes were dark yet clear, and he spoke with an eloquence and articulation that was startling. He removed his jacket to reveal a bright red T-shirt that said, 'Jesus is The Never Ending Story.'

Then Daniel's story began to unfold. He had seen rough times early in life. He'd made some wrong choices and reaped the consequences.. Fourteen years earlier, while backpacking across the country, he had stopped on the beach in Daytona... He tried to hire on with some men who were putting up a large tent and some equipment. A concert, he thought.

He was hired, but the tent would not house a concert but revival services, and in those services he saw life more clearly. He gave his life over to God

'Nothing's been the same since,' he said, 'I felt the Lord telling me to keep walking, and so I did, some 14 years now.'

'Ever think of stopping?' I asked.

'Oh, once in a while, when it seems to get the best of me But God has given me this calling. I give out Bibles That's what's in my sack. I work to buy food and Bibles, and I give them out when His Spirit leads.'

I sat amazed. My homeless friend was not homeless. He was on a mission and lived this way by choice. The question burned inside for a moment and then I asked:

'What's it like?'

'What?'

'To walk into a town carrying all your things on your back and to show your sign?'

'Oh, it was humiliating at first. People would stare and make comments. Once someone tossed a piece of half-eaten bread and made a gesture that certainly didn't make me feel welcome. But then it became humbling to realize that God was using me to touch lives and change people's concepts of other folks like me.'

My concept was changing, too. We finished our dessert and gathered his things. Just outside the door, he paused. He turned to me and said, 'Come Ye blessed of my Father and inherit the kingdom I've prepared for you. For when I was hungry you gave me food, when I was thirsty you gave me drink, a stranger and you took me in.'

I felt as if we were on holy ground. 'Could you use another Bible?' I asked.

He said he preferred a certain translation. It traveled well and was not too heavy. It was also his personal favorite.. 'I've read through it 14 times,' he said.

'I'm not sure we've got one of those, but let's stop by our church and see' I was able to find my new friend a Bible that would do well, and he seemed very grateful.

'Where are you headed from here?' I asked.

'Well, I found this little map on the back of this amusement park coupon.'

'Are you hoping to hire on there for a while?'

'No, I just figure I should go there. I figure someone under that star right there needs a Bible, so that's where I'm going next.'

He smiled, and the warmth of his spirit radiated the sincerity of his mission. I drove

him back to the town-square where we'd met two hours earlier, and as we drove, it started raining. We parked and unloaded his things.

'Would you sign my autograph book?' he asked... 'I like to keep messages from folks I meet.'

I wrote in his little book that his commitment to his calling had touched my life. I encouraged him to stay strong. And I left him with a verse of scripture from Jeremiah, 'I know the plans I have for you, declared the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you; Plans to give you a future and a hope.'

'Thanks, man,' he said. 'I know we just met and we're really just strangers, but I love you.'

'I know,' I said, 'I love you, too.' 'The Lord is good!'

'Yes, He is. How long has it been since someone hugged you?' I asked.

A long time,' he replied

And so on the busy street corner in the drizzling rain, my new friend and I embraced, and I felt deep inside that I had been changed.. He put his things on his back, smiled his winning smile and said, 'See you in the New Jerusalem.'

'I'll be there!' was my reply.

He began his journey again. He headed away with his sign dangling from his bedroll and pack of Bibles. He stopped, turned and said, 'When you see something that makes you think of me, will you pray for me?'

'You bet,' I shouted back, 'God bless.'

'God bless.' And that was the last I saw of him. Late that evening as I left my office, the wind blew strong. The cold front had settled hard upon the town. I bundled up and hurried to my car. As I sat back and reached for the emergency brake, I saw them... a pair of well-worn brown work gloves neatly laid over the length of the handle. I picked them up and thought of my friend and wondered if his hands would stay warm that night without them.

Then I remembered his words: 'If you see something that makes you think of me, will you pray for me?'

Today his gloves lie on my desk in my office.. They help me to see the world and its people in a new way, and they help me remember those two hours with my unique friend and to pray for his ministry. 'See you in the New Jerusalem,' he said. Yes, Daniel, I know I will...

'I shall pass this way but once. Therefore, any good that I can do or any kindness that I can show, let me do it now, for I shall not pass this way again.'

Ephesians 4:32

32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

John 13:34

34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another

Two Choices

What would you do?....you make the choice. Don't look for a punch line, there isn't one. Read it anyway. My question is: Would you have made the same choice?

At a fundraising dinner for a school that serves children with learning disabilities, the father of one of the students delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended. After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he offered a

question:

'When not interfered with by outside influences, everything nature does, is done with perfection.

Yet my son, Shay, cannot learn things as other children do. He cannot understand things as other children do.

Where is the natural order of things in my son?'

The audience was stilled by the query.

The father continued. 'I believe that when a child like Shay, who was mentally and physically disabled comes into the world, an opportunity to realize true human nature presents itself, and it comes in the way other people treat that child.'

Then he told the following story:

Shay and I had walked past a park where some boys Shay knew were playing baseball. Shay asked, 'Do you think they'll let me play?' I knew that most of the boys would not want someone like Shay on their team, but as a father I also understood that if my son were allowed to play, it would give him a much-needed sense of belonging and some confidence to be accepted by others in spite of his handicaps. I approached one of the boys on the field and asked (not expecting much) if Shay could play. The boy looked around for guidance and said, 'We're losing by six runs and the game is in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him in to bat in the ninth inning.'

Shay struggled over to the team's bench and, with a broad smile, put on a team shirt. I watched with a small tear in my eye and warmth in my heart. The boys saw my joy at my son being accepted.

In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shay's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three.

In the top of the ninth inning, Shay put on a glove and played in the right field. Even though no hits came his way, he was obviously ecstatic just to be in the game and on the field, grinning from ear to ear as I waved to him from the stands.

In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shay's team scored again..

Now, with two outs and the bases loaded, the potential winning run was on base and Shay was scheduled to be next at bat.

At this juncture, do they let Shay bat and give away their chance to win the game? Surprisingly, Shay was given the bat. Everyone knew that a hit was all but impossible because Shay didn't even know how to hold the bat properly, much less connect with the ball.

However, as Shay stepped up to the plate, the pitcher, recognizing that the other team was putting winning aside for this moment in Shay's life, moved in a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shay could at least make contact.

The first pitch came and Shay swung clumsily and missed.

The pitcher again took a few steps forward to toss the ball softly towards Shay.

As the pitch came in, Shay swung at the ball and hit a slow ground ball right back to the pitcher.

The game would now be over.

The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could have easily thrown the ball to the first baseman.

Shay would have been out and that would have been the end of the game.

Instead, the pitcher threw the ball right over the first baseman's head, out of reach of all team mates.

Everyone from the stands and both teams started yelling, 'Shay, run to first!

Run to first!'

Never in his life had Shay ever run that far, but he made it to first base.

He scampered down the baseline, wide-eyed and startled.

Everyone yelled, 'Run to second, run to second!'

Catching his breath, Shay awkwardly ran towards second, gleaming and struggling to make it to the base.

By the time Shay rounded towards second base, the right fielder had the ball, the smallest guy on their team who now had his first chance to be the hero for his team. He could have thrown the ball to the second-baseman for the tag, but he understood the pitcher's intentions so he, too, intentionally threw the ball high and far over the third-baseman's head.

Shay ran toward third base deliriously as the runners ahead of him circled the bases toward home.

All were screaming, 'Shay, Shay, Shay, all the Way Shay'

Shay reached third base because the opposing shortstop ran to help him by turning him in the direction of third base, and shouted, 'Run to third!

Shay, run to third!'

As Shay rounded third, the boys from both teams, and the spectators, were on their feet screaming, 'Shay, run home! Run home!'

Shay ran to home, stepped on the plate, and was cheered as the hero who hit the grand slam and won the game for his team

That day', said the father softly with tears now rolling down his face, 'the boys from both teams helped bring a piece of true love and humanity into this world'.

Shay didn't make it to another summer. He died that winter, having never forgotten being the hero and making me so happy, and coming home and seeing his Mother tearfully embrace her little hero of the day!

*I expect to pass through this life but once.
If, therefore there can be any kindness I can show or any good thing I can do
for any fellow being let me do it now...
Let me not defer it, or neglect it,
For I shall not pass this way again.*

Stephen Grellet