

“Caring As Jesus Cares”

Philippians 2:1-11

David P. Nolte

Merry Christmas! In the midst of all our other interests at this season, let us not forget these words of Paul, “In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:35 (NASB)

Jesus cares and He gives – let us learn to care as Jesus cares and to give as He gives. To get us started, let’s read the text:

“Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Philippians 2:1-11 (NASB).

What Paul taught, Jesus demonstrated and we need to emulate. We see it played out in the following story:

Two weeks before Christmas a nine-year-old girl was walking with her friend down the street, sliding on the ice. The two of them were talking about what they hoped to get for Christmas. They stopped to talk to an old man named Harry, who was on his knees pulling weeds from around a large oak tree. He wore a frayed, woolen jacket and a pair of worn garden gloves. His fingers were sticking out the ends, blue from the cold. As Harry responded to the girls, he told them he was getting the yard in shape as a Christmas present to his mother, who had passed away several years before. His eyes brimmed with tears as he patted the old oak. "My mother was all I had. She loved her yard and her trees, so I do this for her at Christmas." The girls had often passed that way before and as they walked on they remembered that the house was shabby, with no wreath, no Christmas tree or other decorations to add cheeriness. Just the lonely figure of Harry sitting by his curtainless

window, and now toiling in the cold, lonely and alone. They had sympathy for him as they noticed how cold his hands were. There is a lesson here:

I. TAKE TIME TO LOOK AROUND AT THE NEEDS OF OTHERS:

- A. Jesus did, so let us “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”
 - 1. This in no way warrants or advises nosiness or that we be buttinskies with unwelcome criticism or advice.
 - 2. The phrase, “do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” means:
 - a. “Take heed to, to give consideration to the things pertinent to others.”
 - b. In other words be outward focused not inwardly self consumed.
- B. This means doing more than what both James and John wrote about.
 - 1. James wrote, “If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?” James 2:15-16 (NASB).
 - 2. John adds this, “But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.” 1 John 3:17-18 (NASB).
- C. Jesus did exactly the opposite! He saw and He acted. He didn’t wish us well and leaved us to our own resources. He didn’t close His heart to us but gave us what we needed. Paul told us to have that same mind.
- D. There are plenty of needs:
 - 1. Loneliness and isolation.
 - 2. Hunger and thirst.
 - 3. Pain and suffering.
 - 4. Homelessness and despair.
 - 5. Guilt and shame.
 - 6. Failure and discouragement
 - 7. Financial difficulties.

Harry’s plight touched the girls’ hearts and quickly they were down on their hands and knees helping him to weed around the trees. It took the three of them a couple of hours to complete the task, and when they finished, Harry pressed a quarter into each of their hands. "I wish I could pay you more, but it's all I've got right now," he said. The quarter seemed to burn a hole of guilt in the one little girl's mind as they returned to their homes. The next day she called her friend and they agreed to put their quarters in a jar marked "Harry's Christmas Present."

The lesson for us is clear:

II. TAKE INVENTORY OF WHAT YOU HAVE TO RELIEVE THE NEEDS OF OTHERS:

- A. Jesus did! The Lord of Heaven took into consideration the needs of sinful mankind and knew that He had what was needed to meet that need, so, He decided to give Christ Jesus, “who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.”
1. Jesus did not divest Himself of deity, He merely packaged it in the body of a human baby.
 2. He was no less God when He walked as man, but He did impose self-limitations to experience hunger and thirst and pain and weariness and temptation and obedience.
 3. As the song says, “They looked through Heaven and found a Savior.” And that was Jesus Christ.
- B. God asked Moses, “What is that in your hand?” It was his rod, a stout stock of wood used as a support or a weapon as needed. God intended for Moses to use what was in his hand to deliver the people from Egypt.
- C. God may be asking you, “What is that in your hand?”
1. He isn’t so much looking at the possession as He is looking at the possessor; he doesn’t just want yours, He wants you!
 2. He wants us to serve with what we have, not to just talk about what we would do with what we don’t have. Paul wrote, “For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.” 2 Corinthians 8:12 (NASB).
 3. “It’s not what you’d do with millions if riches should be your lot – it’s what you’re doing right now with the dollar and dime that you’ve got.”
- D. So, what is that in your hand?
1. Money to share?
 2. A car to provide transportation?
 3. A shoulder upon which to weep?
 4. An oven to prepare a meal?
 5. A home to provide shelter?

The girls noticed Harry’s need and thought about how to relieve it they had in their hand a quarter each. So they established their fund and then they began to seek out small jobs to earn more. Every nickel, dime, and quarter they earned went into the jar. They wanted to show a little kindness to a lonely old man.

The final lesson is:

III. TAKE A LITTLE LOVE TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OTHERS:

- A. Jesus did so as Paul wrote “if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”
1. Love shows itself in fellowship. Fellowship means sharing together.

2. Love is seen in affection and compassion.
 3. Love is demonstrated in harmony, unity and accord.
- B. Love is more than emotion or sentiment. It is actively doing good.
1. Love bears burdens as though they were your own.
 2. Love forgives.
 3. Love includes.
 4. Love invests itself to help others.
- C. No greater description of love could be given than that which Paul gave when he wrote: "If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails; but if there are gifts of prophecy, they will be done away; if there are tongues, they will cease; if there is knowledge, it will be done away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love." 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (NASB).
- D. You can give without loving but you can't love without giving!

Two days before Christmas, they had enough to buy new gloves and a Christmas card. Christmas Eve found them on Harry's doorstep singing carols. When Harry opened the door, they presented him with the gloves wrapped in pretty paper, the card and a pumpkin pie still warm from the oven. With trembling hands, he tore the paper from the gloves, and then to their astonishment, he held them to his face and wept.

They had seen his need, figured out how to help and gave what they could. In an even greater way Jesus saw our lost plight and came alongside to help us.

His is the gift of eternal life in God's home in heaven. Ours is to receive it by faith which is belief, trust and obedience.

Let us honor and praise Him as we make Him Lord of our lives. Do that as we stand to sing "Alleluia."