

The 365 Days of Christmas

Happy New Year Everyone! You've probably taken the Christmas tree down and found a place to put all of your gifts. You may secretly be glad that this season of gift giving is over. Actually, every day should be a season of giving for the believer. We may not be buying presents all year long, but we should be giving. Some of these presents may not be gift wrapped with pretty ribbons, but they are important since they are gifts from the heart. Our words and deeds are powerful. They may even breathe new life into discouraged people. Galatians 6:2 (The Message), tells us to "Stoop down and reach out to those who are oppressed. Share their burdens...."

It is easy to get discouraged in the midst of so much uncertainty and when there are so many needs around us. Admittedly even as a Christian Counselor I sometimes get down. There are so many more that I want to help. The devil loves for you and me to become discouraged. It is his hope that in our discouragement we will do nothing and neglect our faith. Fortunately I am surrounded by friends and family who know how to lift me up in prayer and encourage me to keep going. Sometimes they simply must remind me to "get away for a while", just as Jesus modeled.

Over the years I have been inspired by The Starfish Story below adapted from "The Star Thrower" by Loren Eiseley. It is a reminder that every effort counts:

A businessman was on vacation, walking along the beach, and saw a young boy.

All along the shore were starfish that had washed up from the tide, and were likely to die in the hot sun.

The boy walked along the shore and reached down here and there to pick up a starfish and toss it back into the ocean.

The businessman, so accustomed to efficiency, walked up to the boy to tell him about his nonsensical ways.

"I've noticed what you've been doing, son. You have a warm heart and I know you mean well, but there's so many starfish dying on beaches all over the world. I'm sure you could do something better with your time. Do you really think this is going to make a difference?"

The boy glanced up at the man, and looked down at a starfish by his feet. He picked up the beautiful starfish and tossed it back into the ocean, and said, "It made a difference to that one".

I think that this story is summarized by Galatians 6:9-10 (NKJV), "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are the household of faith."

God expects us to be a blessing to others in what ever way we can. Fortunately He only expects us to bless them in the ways he has equipped us to bless them. Let's look at Matthew 25: 35-36, 40, 45-46 (NKJV)..

³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶ I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

⁴⁰ "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

⁴⁵ "He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

⁴⁶ "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

There are so many ways to be a blessing in our communities. We need volunteers at Catholic Charities, RSVP, The Soup Kitchen, Faith in Action Caregivers, The Freeze Shelter, and even jail ministries. Our city has already put a Be the Blessing campaign in place. One need not look far for an opportunity to serve. Sometimes it is in your own family or neighborhood. Remember "...we are His workmanship, created in Jesus Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV)

I challenge you to serve everyday with the giving spirit of Christmastime.