

Devotions – October 29 – November 4, 2017

By Rev. David Christenson

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Sunday, October 29, 2017

Text: Galatians 5:13

13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.

NRSV

This week we're going to look at scriptures that talk about our role as servant to one another. And then read about someone who did precisely that. You might well call it "paying it forward" because that's what it is and that is what we're called to do. In our text above, Paul reminds us that we have been set free. Free to look past our wants, needs, and desires to reach out and help another who is in need.

A young boy, Myles Eckert, found a \$20 bill in the parking lot of a Cracker Barrel. Instead of keeping it, he gave it to a stranger who happened to be — a soldier, Lt. Col. Frank Dailey — with this note: "Dear Soldier — my dad was a soldier. He's in heaven now. I found this 20 dollars in the parking lot when we got here. We like to pay it forward in my family. It's your lucky day! Thank you for your service. Myles Eckert, a gold star kid."

Dailey was so moved by the gesture and it didn't take long for it to go viral. After a CBS story on Myles was shared via email and social media over half a million times, he was invited to appear on *Ellen* and visit with former President George W. Bush at his presidential library. A year later, his family is spearheading a nonprofit organization called the Power of 20 with the goal of giving on an even greater scale to charities and families in need — all with the help of everyday citizens inspired by Myles' one small but great act.

Let Us Pray: *Father in heaven, faith calls us to be servants to one another. Help us to look past ourselves to our brother or sister who has a need that we can fill. Amen.*



Monday, October 30, 2017

Text: Romans 12:9-13

⁹“Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; ¹⁰ love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.” NRSV

One evening while shopping at Aldi's, Jane was in line at the register. A woman in front of her was unloading her cart while the clerk rang up her purchases. After the last item, the clerk totaled the sale. As the woman dug in her purse for her money, she suddenly realized she did not have enough . . . she was three dollars short! Embarrassed that she didn't have enough, she grabbed the frozen pizza and told the clerk to delete it, saying that her kids wanted pizza, but they'd have to have something else. Overhearing the woman, Jane dug in her purse and pulled out the three dollars the woman needed and gave it to her. The woman protested saying that she didn't have to do that. Jane said, "Yes I do! It's what were supposed to do . . . help each other."

When the woman thanked Jane, she asked how she could repay her. Jane said, "When you see that someone else is short of money, help them!"

Let Us Pray: Heavenly Father, you have showered us with every good thing under heaven. Help us to use what you have given to help the stranger who is in need. Amen.



Tuesday, October 31, 2017

Text: Hebrews 6:10

"10 For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do."

Does it really matter what we do for one another? Many believe it does but some doubt. My Grandmother used to say, when you pretend not to see a need simply because you're either too busy or in too much of a hurry, there is One who knows.

One evening I happened upon a car accident. The car had missed a curve, went up the embankment, become air borne and crashed through a large sign. It came to rest on its top. When I got out of the car, people were standing around waiting for the police and ambulance to arrive. The man standing next to me said, come on, let's help. I didn't know it at the time, but my helper was a paramedic. He told me to hold the driver's head very still while he crawled inside to support the driver's cervical spine. After the squad arrived, he came over to me and said, "You did a good job. Have you ever thought of becoming an EMT?" He briefly described what an EMT was and how to become one. I was so impressed that I signed up for the class. When I arrived for the first session of the class, my helper was the teaching paramedic.

He took me aside and said it doesn't take any commitment to stand and watch, but it does take faith to step forward and help. Is there something you can do to prepare yourself to help when the time comes?

Let Us Pray: Heavenly Father, you call us to serve one another. Empower us to reach out and get involved. Amen.



Wednesday, November 1, 2017

Text: 1 Peter 4:10

“10 Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.” NRSV

The story is told of a pizza shop owner, Mason Wartman, in Philadelphia who, aware of the many homeless around his shop, developed a way in which he and his clientele could help them.

He devised a plan where when someone purchased a pizza, for a dollar more they could make a contribution to prepay a slice of pizza for a homeless person. If they said “yes”, he would put it down and post it on the wall, and a homeless person could redeem it. To date, that pizzeria has given more than ten thousand slices of pizza to the homeless

Let Us Pray: *Heavenly Father, you call us to serve Jesus by serving each other. Open our hearts to see the needs of the homeless and give us the faith to reach out to them and fill their needs. Amen.*



Thursday, November 2, 2107

Text: John 15:13 NRSV

“13 No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends.”

When I go out east, I try to stop at the National Fire Fighter Memorial in Thurmont, Maryland. I go there to pay my respects to all of my brother firefighters that fell in the line of duty. While there, I look for the plaque that bears the name of a friend of mine: David Edwards. Dave worked as an EMT- Paramedic at Riverview Hospital in Noblesville, IN. He also served as lieutenant on a fire department outside Indianapolis. One day, Dave and his crew were dispatched to a house fire. Upon reaching the scene, Dave learned that there was possibly a child still in the house. He quickly donned an air pack and entered the house and began a room-to-room search. Unable to find anyone, he prepared to exit the house. That was when he was notified that the child was safe outside. As Dave walked through the house to the backdoor, the floor beneath him collapsed sending Dave into the fiery basement. By the time his crew reached him, it was too late. With no thought of personal danger, Dave answered the call and gave his life to rescue someone. My friend was a hero!

Let Us Pray: *Loving Father, when we are frozen into inactivity by fear, help us to remember that we are here to selflessly serve one another, especially those in need. Amen.*



Friday, November 3, 2017

Text: Mark 10:45

⁴⁵***“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” NRSV***

Like you, I don't think I could ever forget September 11, 2001. On that day the unthinkable happened as we were attacked by terrorists who commandeered airplanes and flew them into the twin towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C. We watched helplessly as the frightened and injured streamed from the towers, and the firefighters and EMS personnel streamed in to help. EMS and fire personnel from all over New York City responded to the call for help.

While fire and EMS personnel prepared to ascend the towers, there was one individual, Richard Rescorla, who, instead of leaving, stayed behind in the tower to escort as many people as possible to safety. We later heard that he was instrumental in helping two thousand six hundred eighty-seven people to safety. Richard never came out of the tower!

Let Us Pray: *Father in heaven, thank you for people like Richard. Help each of us, if the time should come, to be bold and daring in faith to help those in need. Amen.*



Saturday, November 4, 2017

Text: Luke 6:38

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.” NSRV

I have been so blessed to have served my ministry in congregations with exceptional people. One of them was Helen. I had just arrived at my new call and began scheduling calls to meet everyone. One Sunday morning, an elderly woman named Helen stopped into my office and offered her services in calling for appointments. I thanked her and said she didn't have to do that. She looked shocked and said, "I want to!" So, I gave her

a list of families. She called and scheduled many of them. On the first evening of calling, Helen appeared at the office door again and said, "Come on, let's go!" I must have had an incredulous look on my face because she immediately said, "I've lived here all my life and know my way around. Besides," she said, "you'll get lost!" Then she said, "It will be fun!" Helen ended up making every visit with me.

Several years later, sick and dying, she said with a very familiar twinkle in her eye, "Pastor Dave, I really enjoyed helping you. It gave me purpose in my old age! Thank you for allowing an old woman to be useful!" Helen passed to the Church triumphant not long after that. I spent the rest of my days in active ministry missing my faithful friend Helen who helped because she wanted to.

Let Us Pray: *Loving God and Father, thank you for people like Helen who want to get involved in spite of age or sickness. Amen.*

