

Water for the King

“The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy” (Psalm 103:8). “All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies” (Psalm 25:10).

The legend is told of a desert wanderer who found a crystal spring of unsurpassed freshness. The water was so pure he decided to bring some to his king. Barely satisfying his own thirst, he filled a leather bottle with the clear liquid and carried it many days beneath the desert sun before he reached the palace. When he finally laid his offering at the feet of his sovereign, the water had become stale due to the old container in which it had been stored. However, the king would not let his faithful subject even imagine that it was unfit for use. He tasted it with expressions of gratitude and delight, and his loyal servant went away with a joyful heart. After he was gone, others sampled the water, and expressed their surprise that the king had even pretended to enjoy it. The King said, "It is not the water I tasted, but the love that prompted the offering." Many times our service is marked by multiplied imperfections, but our King looks at our love for Him, and says, "I will be merciful to My people."

A Beautiful Princess

“Do not let your adornment be merely outward; arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel; rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God” (1Peter 3:3-4).

There's an old story about a princess who was unhappy because she was not pretty. A kind old aunt taught her three lessons: (1) Smile at everyone you meet. (2) Look for all the beautiful things you can find. (3) Say something kind to everyone. The princess took the lessons to heart and soon was so popular and so busy that she forgot all about her looks. Instead, she gained a reputation throughout the land as a great beauty. A change in attitude reshaped her whole life. Let us strive for that inner beauty which is precious in the sight of God.

Loyal Armor-Bearers

The Israelites and the Philistines were at war. While Saul relaxed under a pomegranate tree with his men, Jonathan and his armor-bearer left camp quietly to see if the Lord would work on their behalf, believing that “nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few” (1Sam. 14:6).

Jonathan and his helper were about to cross a path between two high cliffs. Armed enemy soldiers were stationed above them on both sides. They were two men against who knows how many. When Jonathan suggested they climb up after them, the armor-bearer never flinched. “Do all that is in your heart,” he told Jonathan. “I am with you, according to your heart” (v.7). So the two climbed the cliff, and with God’s help they overcame the enemy (vv.8-14). We have to admire this courageous young armor-bearer. He lugged the armor up that cliff and stayed with Jonathan, following along behind and killing those Jonathan wounded.

The church needs strong leaders to face our spiritual foes, but they must not be left to face them alone. They need the help and support of everyone in the congregation, loyal “armor-bearers” like you and me who are willing to join them in battle against the “enemy of our souls.”

The Servant’s Life

There is a poem by George MacDonald titled, “The Hidden Life.” It tells the story of an intellectually gifted young Scot who turned his back on a prestigious academic career to return

to his aging father and to the family farm. There he engaged in what MacDonald called, "ordinary deeds" and "simple forms of human helpfulness." His friends lamented what they saw as a waste of his talents.

Perhaps you too serve in some unnoticed place, doing nothing more than ordinary deeds. Others might think that's a waste. But God wastes nothing. Every act of love rendered for His sake is noted and has eternal consequences. Every place where a godly deed is done, no matter how small, is ground where God is glorified. Influence is more than lofty acts and words. It can be a simple matter of human helpfulness: being present, listening, understanding the need, loving, and praying. This is what turns daily duty into worship and service.

The apostle Paul challenged the Colossians: "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus," and "do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance" (Col. 3:17,23-24). God takes notice and delights in using us. The way to accomplish much for Christ is to serve Him in any way we can.

Standing in the Offering Plate

One preacher often said that he disliked preaching about financial giving to the church. He said a previous job required fundraising, so he didn't like putting any unnecessary pressure on people. But when he was teaching 2Corinthians and came to chapters eight and nine, he couldn't avoid the topic of giving. He would then use the illustration of placing an offering plate on the floor, stepping into it, and standing there as he talked about the importance of giving our whole selves to the Lord, not just our wallets.

Those two chapters in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians give us a number of attitudes and actions that we are to display in our giving to the Lord:

- Give yourself to the Lord first (8:5).
- Give remembering the example of the Lord Jesus (8:9).
- Give according to your means (8:11-12).
- Give enthusiastically because of God's love (9:2).
- Give generously, not grudgingly or because of outside pressure (9:5-7).

Next time the offering plate comes around on Sunday, imagine yourself stepping into it. It will help you to excel in the grace of giving (8:7). When we give ourselves completely to the Lord, all lesser giving becomes easier.

A Moments Wisdom

- You can't let praise or criticism get to you. It's a weakness to get caught up in either one.
- One of the weaknesses of our age is our apparent inability to distinguish our needs from our greeds.
- We always weaken whatever we exaggerate.
- Failure to accord credit to anyone for what he may have done is a great weakness in any man.
- No amount of ability is of the slightest avail without honor.
- Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm.
- Love isn't finding a perfect person. It's seeing an imperfect person perfectly.
- It is a curious thought, but it is only when you see people looking ridiculous that you realize just how much you love them.
- Being happy doesn't mean that everything is perfect. It means that you've decided to look beyond the imperfections.