



Caring Hands, Caring Hearts

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave--- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Matthew 20: 26-28)

Dear Opal,

Have you ever had a front door with a peephole that enabled you to see who had arrived at your house? Then when you looked through the little convex lens to study the shape that had sounded your knocker, it allowed you to make a safe decision.

Certainly, when peeping through that hole, the stranger did look odd due to the lens making the individual appear large in the middle and tiny at the head and feet, that of a totally distorted image.

This analogy can serve as a vivid illustration as to how we view the world outside our own space. People have a tendency to walk around with a very narrow field of vision as it relates to individuals and concepts. If people do not share the same point of view regarding ideas, are clothed in a different color of skin, live on the wrong side of the tracks, belong to another generation or gender, and seemingly would not fit within a chosen circle of friends, they will forever remain strangers unless the door of our heart is opened.

Yet, Jesus modeled hospitality to everyone at the risk of being ostracized by even his own people. In fact, if we choose to follow in his footsteps, a risk will be involved because it requires opening the door to our heart really wide. Ouch! What if I lose all my friends? Will I become an outcast and be ostracized? Possibly! What if you don't take the risk and follow the example that Christ modeled for you?

- 1) You are going to lose out on the opportunity of sharing love.
- 2) An individual's life might not get better without your assistance.
- 3) Both you and another person might miss out on learning to trust rather than fear.
- 4) Above all, the possibility will be missed of answering the question, "Who is this Jesus you are always talking about?"
- 5) When we meet Jesus face to face, we will miss out on hearing him say, "**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, 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**" Matthew 25: 35-36

Certainly, Jesus will love talking to my friends pictured below who opened their hearts to total strangers.



Opal

Opal, remember how people used to freely come to your house for Sunday dinner knowing they would not only be welcome but consume a delicious meal and a time of fellowship with your family? You were known for using that old pressure cooker as a fast method for preparing an abundance of food.

No stranger was turned away from the door of your heart. You loved all God's children and had a reputation for listening to their problems without judgement. Can you just see Jesus sitting at your table wearing a happy smile? And...I'll bet his belly was full!



Thankful & Blessed
Melody & Tim

As a volunteer, I have been blessed to work with these two wonderful activity directors at Glendale Gardens Nursing Home for many years. Not only do they love the residents equally, but go way beyond in making each resident's life better. Words cannot describe all the times they have sacrificed just so those in their care had choices, love, and energy filled activities that were indescribable. Imagine how many times Jesus laughed and danced with them! It probably resembled a Jewish wedding that lasted a week.



Miss Mary

Mary, a humble resident, was known throughout her life for having a heart filled with love for all God's family. She used her hands and heart in helping children that were poor and hungry providing both food and love. She taught this writer about the plight of people who wore the wrong skin color. She placed her arm next to mine and said, "Honey, look how light you are compared to me! However, our hearts are the same color." Yes, black lives do matter! History shows this.

Opal, there is a poignant longing in all mankind, no matter the generation, that can only be satisfied when holding tightly to God's hand. His true character can be observed by the many blessings he provides his children, as well as the patience demonstrated as it relates to forgiveness of our numerous sins.

Just think how many times he has forgiven each of us due to our stiff necks and self-centered actions. So often, we lean in toward our own longings and desires rather than those of the human race. Instead of praying for God to fulfill our wishes, we need to turn our collective prayers toward an end to violence, misery, and hate in this Spirit starved world. Let the prayers be so passionate from our lips that the message from **2 Chronicles 7:14**, "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land," will come alive in our heart.

As an example, let us see how Christmas would appear in our hearts if we truly looked past the woolly little lambs and the shepherd boy with his drum into its true significance. Instead of the creche being the setting for just a sweet little baby, it would be viewed as a significant time when God's infinite love was born into the world of flesh, blood, and bone; all because he is a champion of the poor, the oppressed, and the despised.

Given this prospective, as Christmas approached, we would open the door to our heart really wide and serve the mashed potatoes at the mission wearing an inviting smile that is full of compassion. We would purchase gifts for those unable to afford a Christmas for their children. The door to our heart would be so wide open that our journey would be filled with more than chance encounters. Our hungry souls would search for connections to total strangers that need healing hands and hearts just like the picture above; the one that has formed the heart by working as a team with no rules as to who can be in the group. Above all, this activity would be a year around behavior, not just once a year.

Since our Creator is one in the same, we need to realize and accept the fact that, although our histories and traditions differ, we are all loved equally by the One who formed us. We worship the same God and the Lord of all, Jesus Christ; a Savior that died for everyone. Let not our human imperfections and misunderstandings divide us, but instead, powerfully draw us together.

Opal, one lesson I have internalized at this point in my life is how powerful fear is within each of us as we take the first step in walking down a new path in life, so much that it can hold us deceptively captivated to the point of being imprisoned. Actually, some say it is a demonstration of faith in the enemy rather than God. Others proclaim that with the gift of life comes a grave responsibility of caring for others, while at the same time incurring a risk. What feels like a daily ritual of the predictable in our walk is actually an unimaginative journey that lacks compassion for our fellowman.



Meet Etty Hillesum, a Dutch woman who died in Auschwitz and was known for her deep faith and courage. Once, when she received an exemption from being sent to a concentration camp, she wrote, “I want to be sent to every one of the camps that lie scattered all over Europe, I want to be at every front, I don’t ever want to be what they call, ‘safe’.”

Certainly, after reading the book titled “The Volunteer” by Jack Fairweather that described a man’s mission to destroy Auschwitz, there are no words to describe Etty Hillesum’s courageous decision.

Opal, ETTY's story caused this writer to fully realize that the notions that appear in the head are more than fantasy. There is no doubt but what God's hand is involved in them from beginning to end.

Then, if we took action and faced our fear head on? Can you draw the visual image of the entire heavenly realm would sound as laughter and praises filled the space all around?

Contemplating whether these actions are only understood and followed by the highly educated and experts in society, one only needs to read the words of a lowly virgin girl named Mary who turned out to be the mother of our Lord called the Magnificat. Clearly, her words demonstrate how our God feels about the downtrodden in society. Let us follow his lead by touching those in need with caring hands and hearts! Amen!

Mary's Song

⁴⁶ And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord

⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

⁴⁸ for he has been mindful

of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

**⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.**

**⁵⁰ His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.**

**⁵¹ He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.**

**⁵² He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.**

**⁵³ He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.**

**⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful**

**⁵⁵ to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors."**

Love,

Colene