

Ordinary 33A - 2020

God's Kingdom Comes through Small Acts of Kindness

Have you ever felt like giving up? Have you ever wondered, even in what you try to do for God, whether it is doing any good? Let God be the judge of that! I remember reading about a little girl named Annie who in 1876 was ten years of age. She was put into a poor house for children... called the Tewkesbury Alms House in Massachusetts. Her mother had died and her father had deserted her. Her aunt and uncle found her too difficult to handle. She had a bad disposition, a violent temper... stemming in part from eyes afflicted with painful trachoma. She had been put in the poorhouse because no one wanted her. She was such a wild one that at times she had to be tied down.

But there was another inmate named Maggie who cared for Annie. Maggie talked to her, fed her, even though Annie would throw her food on the floor, cursing and rebelling with every ounce of her being. But Maggie was a Christian and out of her convictions she was determined to love this dirty, unkempt, spiteful, unloving little girl. It wasn't easy, but slowly it got through to Annie that she was not the only who was suffering. Maggie also had been abandoned. And gradually Annie began to respond. Maggie told her about a school for the blind and Annie began to beg to be sent there, and finally, consent was given and she went to the Perkins Institute. After a series of operations her sight was partially restored. She was able to finish her schooling and graduate at age twenty. Having been blind so long she told the director of Perkins that she wanted to work with blind and difficult children.

They found a little girl seven years old in Alabama who was blind and deaf from the age of two. So, Annie Sullivan went to Tuscumbia, Alabama to unlock the door of Helen Keller's dark prison and to set her free. One human being, in the name of Christ, helping another human being! That's how God's kingdom comes, through small acts of kindness! (by Robert W. Bohl from *Reluctant Servants*)

The man who did not bury his talent:

Antonio Stradivari was born in Cremona, Italy, in 1644. Because Antonio's voice was high and squeaky, he did not pass the audition for the Cremona Boys' Choir. When he took violin lessons, the neighbors persuaded his parents to make him stop. Yet Antonio still wanted to make music. His friends made fun of him because his only talent was wood-carving.

When Antonio was 22, he became an apprentice to a well-known violinmaker, Nicholas Amati. Under his master's training Antonio's knack for carving grew, and his hobby became his craft. He started his own violin shop when he was 36. He worked patiently and faithfully. By the time he died at 93, he had built over 1,500 violins, each one bearing a label that read, "*Antonius Stradivarius Cremonensis Faciebat Anno.....*" ("Antonio Stradivarius of Cremona made in the year...") They are the most sought-after violins in the world and sell for more than \$100,000 each.

Antonio couldn't sing, or play, or preach, or teach, but he used the ability he had, and his violins are still making beautiful music today. Antonio is a challenge to people who have only a single talent and who try to bury the talent for fear of failure -- like the lazy servant in Jesus' parable.

Talents- use them or lose them:

There was an American businessman by the name of Wilson. He was tired of the Great Depression, rising taxes, and increasing crime, and in 1940 he sold his home and business and moved to an island in the South Pacific to get away from it all. Balmy and ringed with beautiful beaches, it was a paradise. Sounds like the perfect setting doesn't it. You know the name of the island? Iwo Jima. For those too young to recall, Iwo Jima, was an island where the fiercest fighting between American forces and the Japanese took place in the Second World War. You have to use your talent or lose it.

"Do you like the house?"

J. Wallace Hamilton in his book *What About Tomorrow?* tells the story of a wealthy builder. He called in his top assistant manager and said, "I am going away for a while. While I am gone, I want you to oversee the building of my home. I am going to be retiring in a few years, I have these wonderful plans, and excellent parcels of land by the lake, and I want you to oversee the building of our home." As he left on his journey, the assistant said to himself, "He lives in luxury and has done very little for me. When he retires, what will I have?" So the assistant used every opportunity to feather his own nest. He hired an immoral builder, he used inferior products, he hired inferior workmen and when the house was completed, it looked fine on the outside, but its deficiencies in workmanship and material would soon show as the test of time came. It was not a job "well done." When the wealthy builder came back, he said, "Do you like the house?" The assistant manager replied, "Yes, I do." The wealthy builder then asked, "Is this house beautiful?" "It certainly is," the assistant manager replied. "Great," said the wealthy builder, "because it is my gift to you. The house is yours." Each of us lives in the house we are building each day. Where are you in this story?