

All are of Worth by Deb Crowley

Peace Moment for Oct. 9, 2022

Caucasian, black, brown, men, women, educated, uneducated...they arrive at the resource center with a single commonality. They are persons without a permanent address.

Some dwell in a tent or are temporarily sheltered in an apartment, or living in a car. Their meager means bring them to this place where they are given food, clothing, bedding, personal care items, heaters and other items to get them through the week. Ones that qualify receive help finding permanent shelter or health care.

Demanding, crude, the stench of smoke or other chemical substance, or just plain dirt penetrate their clothes. The marginalized living outside the "norm." They are treated with respect. They are "seen", maybe for the first time in forever. Still, they are welcomed, offered a sandwich or water while their "need list" is fulfilled.

Volunteers are instructed to treat everyone that walks in the door as a person of worth. Hug them, pray with them, simply listen...whatever the need, treat them with respect.

So comments made by a volunteer struck me very odd one day while working at the thrift store. A man and woman walked in, he searching for a jacket. She shopped a little then left. His straggly long hair, unkempt beard, and tattered clothes bespoke the lack of money for luxury items or frivolity.

He found a jacket...a real bargain that looked warm and practically new for a great price. But, his partner carried the money. Leaving the jacket on the counter, he headed to the door to try and find her to get the needed funds.

The volunteer said, "If it were me, I'd leave him too!" Shocked, I thought I had misunderstood the comment. She repeated the statement, commenting on his rough looks. I replied that everyone is worthy of love even if it isn't who we would choose.

As I contemplated this encounter, I thought of how the practice of seeing through the lens of Jesus and ingrain the worth of all persons in my soul made such a difference in how I viewed the situation. His appearance and roughness did not conjure up judgement, rather gratefulness that there is now a convenient place where he could obtain a warm jacket as evening temperatures plummet.

I learned later that my coworker is a nonbeliever. She spends a lot of time serving the homeless so has a generous heart. She too has great worth. My plan is to love her into seeing herself and others we serve as persons of immense worth regardless of how they look, smell, or act.

Seeing through the eyes of Christ is a small way to create peace. It begins with me.

Prayer

Oh, God, we have so much to learn, so much to experience as we serve those outside our comfort zone. Just as Jesus saw and acknowledged the beauty in the lepers, the adulteress, the mentally ill may we recognize the beauty and worth in the homeless, the drunk, the angry, the bitter persons we meet. They too are your children, your beloved creation. Let us not just theorize that all persons are of worth, but

act with your kind of love and compassion that lives the truth of their value. Open our eyes, O Lord. In Jesus Name. Amen.