

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, who gives to all a life worth living,

**SCRIPTURE:**

1 Timothy 6:6-8 (MSG) – Larger reading: 1 Timothy 6:1-10

*“A devout life does bring wealth, but it’s the rich simplicity of being yourself before God. Since we entered the world penniless and will leave it penniless, if we have bread on the table and shoes on our feet, that’s enough.”*

**STORY:**

Rudyard Kipling, English poet, speaking to a graduating class at McGill University, advised the graduates not to care too much for money or power or fame; for, he said in effect, “Someday you will meet a man who cares for none of these things ... and then you will know how poor you are.”

**OBSERVATION:**

It is always an eye opening experience to see your life through the eyes of another. Thus, was my experience when I gave transportation to an American Cancer Society patient, which was something that I did for about 6 years. I picked her up at one of the retirement centers here in Bradenton to transport her to the doctor’s office for her daily treatment. You never know their life’s story so that is the “jumping off” point ... a means to engage them in conversation.

Her story began on an Indian reservation in Idaho. She is half American Indian thanks to her father. At the age of 17 she had to get married because she was pregnant. Her husband was nine and a half years older than she was. There are five children, four girls and one boy, as a result of their marriage. One daughter lives here and I would see her occasionally when I shopped at her Target store. The other four children all live in California.

When she got in the car she noticed that I moved the steering wheel down to better fit my driving style. “What did you just do?” she asked. And then the questions continued to come about the various buttons, little lights, etc. “I’ve never been in such a fancy car before,” she shared with the awe of a little girl. What she saw as a “fancy car” I saw as just a standard car ... it was a Honda Pilot. Seeing your life through the eyes of another is interesting.

The conversation soon moved to what she and husband did before they retired. “Well, you see, he never got to retire. He simply died of that drinking disease. I don’t quite remember the name of it, but it is the one where the alcohol attacks the liver.” When I mentioned Cirrhosis of the Liver she responded, “Yes, that be it!” Her husband died May 5, 1994.

I then asked what he did before he passed away. “Well, he was good with his hands when he wasn’t hitting me. Oh, I loved him a lot, but I had to watch out so he wouldn’t hit me and I kind of had to protect him so others wouldn’t beat him up. You probably

could say he was a handy man of sorts, but what we really did was dumpster diving. You would be surprised what you could find in those dumpsters. It was kind of like a treasure hunt ... a yard sale of sorts just not in some bodies yard. Knowing which dumpsters to check out on which day of the week was the key. Certain stores would just throw away good stuff like it was of no value. And, boy, there was also a lot of good food just thrown away like nobody could use it. But, we did. It was fun. We sold cardboard and aluminum cans to make our money. We lived good even if we did have to sleep in our car or in the back alleys.” It is interesting to compare your life while listening to another person speak of a life that you have never experienced.

Eventually I asked about the retirement home she is presently living in. “Oh, sir, it is real nice. I have a one bedroom and I’ve fixed it up real nice like. I don’t eat in the dinning room. I do all of my own cooking, but the people there are all real friendly like, except for the snooty ones who think they are better than you.”

Boy, I sure hope she beats the odds and win her latest battle with cancer, but if she doesn’t she will die happy, thinking that she had somehow won the lottery what with her one bedroom “fixed up real nice like.” Next time, if there is a next time, I am asked to drive her to one of her doctor’s appointments I will need to remember that she loves candy, especially 3-Musketeers or Milky Way – nothing with nuts since “I don’t got no teeth and my dentures don’t fit too good. You know, sore gums and all.”

You never really know whom you are going to pick up when asked by the American Cancer Society to provide transportation, but everyone adds to the spice of life and a different perspective to ones own existence and, it is all about perspective. We see life just how we expect to see life ... nothing more ... nothing less.

**QUOTE:**

*“A shoe manufacturer who decided to open the Congo market sent two salesmen to the undeveloped territory. One salesman cabled back: ‘Prospect here nil. No one wears shoes.’ The other salesman reported enthusiastically, ‘Market potential terrific! Everyone is barefooted.’”* Source Unknown

**PRAYER:**

Help us to come alive as long as we are breathing. Help us to see what really is important in life. Help us to prioritize what really belongs to us. Free us from having to hold on to the stuff we have accumulated ... after all it is “just” stuff. Guide us to a stronger relationship with you and remind us often that that relationship is the only thing that we will carry into eternity. Amen

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim  
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