

Jesus Christ and the Relativity of Gratitude



An influential man named Simon was hosting Jesus, but did not treat him as an honored guest. In fact, Simon thought it most amusing that this man they called the Christ allowed his feet to be washed by a fallen woman's tears (Luke 7:37). If Jesus were really a prophet, the Pharisee thought, he would never allow *this* woman to touch him.

Oh, but Jesus knew all about her sin ... Indeed, He knew every failing in the woman's life ... just as He knows every failing in mine, and yours. Yet He never stopped caring for her, and never joined the rest of society in condemning her. In fact, so moved was Jesus by the brokenness in her heart, He forgave her sins.

As Jesus explained to Simon: "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

It's God's agenda for humanity ... He will forgive us much, and in response, we will begin to learn what God's definition of love is really all about. Those who don't think they need a Savior have cold hearts – it's a universal principle. People who are forgiven despite their unlovable errors – those are the ones who begin to love much.

Call it the relativity of gratitude ... only those humbled enough (through the power and grace of the Holy Spirit) to declare moral bankruptcy become eligible to apply for the dispensation found only in Jesus Christ.



The Barnabas Team witnessed a vivid example of the relativity of gratitude on December 5 at the Buena Fe Day Labor Center in Loxahatchee. The Lord blessed us with perhaps the best Barnabas ever. He created a wonderful balance: More items than ever to give away ... and a greater need than ever among the day-worker

community.

That need among the immigrant community right now is profound. As the economy has worsened and the construction and landscaping businesses have contracted, the day laborers have been hardest hit. Each day, they wait long hours for contractors to swing by in their pickup trucks and take them off to job sites to dig ditches, plant sod, lug two by fours, and so forth. But in the past 18 months, the work has dried up. The economic downturn has affected everyone in our country, some terribly so -- but those living on the margins of society are always hardest hit.



No wonder then to see those who have so little respond with such joy to the things God brought them. There was music and laughter, a day's respite from toil, and the little rain that fell had no chance of casting a shadow over such grateful hearts.



There are some things that know no language barrier ... among them is the happiness of a mother carrying a baby swaddled snug against her back, holding another child's hand, and lugging a black plastic garbage bag overflowing with much-needed clothes, shoes, toys and household items. All glory be to God, Amen!



We noticed a worrisome trend, however. Last year, the attendees were almost all women; the men stood by and watched as their women went through and selected things for the household.

This year, we saw many more men than women. And we naturally wondered why.

While there's no way to know for sure, there have been reports that the economic circumstances are putting stress on immigrant

families. Without enough work to support the entire family, mothers and children probably have no choice but to move back to their native countries, while the men stay here, wait for the economy to turn around, and send what little money they make back home to support their families.

Sadly, it is probable that some families are literally being torn apart by the bad economy, and the children, as always, are caught in the middle. As one immigration expert recently told NPR: "Many of them say, 'If I'm going to be poor, I'd rather be poor in my country and not in the United States, because here it's not working.'"



This Christmas Season, please take a moment to pray "for the least of these." Considering how much has been forgiven us in our lives through Christ Jesus, one small way we can begin to express our gratitude for what He has done is to show our prayerful love for those He cares so very much about.

It raises an interesting question: Why does God love these humble, meek, poor people so very much? Perhaps it is because in their current circumstances, like the woman who bathed the feet of Christ in her tears, they recognize the simple truth that He is their only hope. And He is ours as well.

So what a remarkable lesson Barnabas has taught us all: It turns out we aren't so very different from them. His Grace is more than sufficient for us all.

It's one thing all believers can be profoundly grateful for this joyful Christmas Season: When it comes to the Grace of Jesus Christ, there's never a recession. Hallelujah!

Here's wishing a blessed, safe, and fruitful Christmas to all the MCM family and friends

....



David Patten
Director
The Barnabas Project
An Outreach of Mary Craig Ministries, Inc.
114 East McNab Road, Pompano Beach, FL 33060
www.marycraig.org