

SATURDAY, AUGUST 14, 2010

Mission Tuesday #74 & #75



Last week our family was on vacation, so I was not at Mission of Hope. It was the first week in so long that I wasn't there at all. I have to say I missed it...I missed my friends and I missed not being there. While we were away I read the book, *Same Kind of Different as Me*. It reminded me so much of what God is doing at Mission of Hope. My mind was consumed with homelessness and those who are considered the least, the last and the lost...those who are dear to God's heart.

I couldn't wait to get there this past Tuesday. Walking through the doors, it felt as if I truly was "home." As I think back to the first time I walked through the doors to volunteer during the day, oh how God has changed my heart! I couldn't wait to see my co-workers and most of all, I couldn't wait to see my friends...some who are homeless, some who have addictions to a substance, some who have mental illnesses, some who just need to feel loved. I have to say it felt good to be missed while I was gone, and I was sure to share with my friends how much I missed them and thought of them while I was on vacation.

My intention was to write about the needs of the Mission today, but early this morning while I was reading my email, I felt I was to write about something that was in my email box instead. It was an article, I guess you could call it, that was in our local paper yesterday...about a woman who has been arrested 106 times. The 106th time was Thursday evening on a charge she had never been charged with before. When I opened up the article, the photo on my computer screen was of one of my friends at the Mission.

I read the article with tears. She was at the Mission yesterday. Actually, she's been there most of this week. She's been exhausted, and we've caught her trying to sleep on our benches and chairs. She asked me one day for a toothbrush and toothpaste, then went into the restroom to brush her teeth. She's been hungry, and I've seen her eat like she hasn't had a meal in awhile. She can try my patience at times, but she can also shock me with her kindness...just like she did yesterday.

I was sitting at one of the front tables talking to another patron in the afternoon, watching through the windows the rain pouring down outside. I could see this friend out of the corner of my eye waiting to get my attention. As I looked her direction, expecting her to ask for something, she asked, "Julie, do you want me to bring that rug in out of the rain?" Here, the rug that is usually right inside the front door was still outside after being shaken and moved so the front floor could be swept and mopped. I remember replying, "Oh gosh, yes! Thank you (name)!"

I was shocked by her kindness. She noticed that rug out there getting wet, and offered to bring it in. She then proceeded to sweep the leaves off the rug that had fallen on it from the wind and rain. She then wiped the floor where some rain water dripped off of the rug onto the floor. I thanked her again. I didn't even notice it out there, but she did and acted on it! Bless her heart.

After I read that article this morning, I scrolled down below it and saw that people could comment on the article. I began to read some...and I wish I wouldn't have. People were saying all sorts of terrible things about this woman, my friend. Judging her. Judging her heart. Judging what she did. The things that were written brought me to tears. They have no idea who this woman is. They have no idea what I've seen in her eyes lately...fear, loneliness, sadness, emptiness. I've also seen glimpses of hope, I've seen her smile, and I've seen her love and kindness like I did yesterday. Part of me wanted to reply to them saying they have no idea what she deals with on a daily basis and to quit judging her...but then I realized I would also be judging them. I decided to pray instead...for all of them that God would change their hearts toward the least, the lost and the last, like He has changed mine.

I don't know her story. I don't know what she deals with daily. I don't understand how she could have been arrested 106 times. But God does, and I believe He's not done with her. He loves her just as much as He loves me. I do know though, she has a place where she can come away from her life on the streets to feel valued, accepted and loved...the way Jesus loved...unconditionally. Mission of Hope is that place. And, I still consider this woman my friend. One thing God has continued to teach me at Mission of Hope is instead of judging someone and their actions, help them and pray for them, as I really have no idea what they are going through and what they may be dealing with. I'm not them, and I don't live in their shoes.

I pray God continues to teach all of us that.