

## Mission Tuesday #97



Psalm 113: 4-9 (Message)

*God is higher than anything and anyone, outshining everything you can see in the skies. Who can compare with God, our God, so majestically enthroned, surveying his magnificent heavens and earth?*

***He picks up the poor from out of the dirt, rescues the wretched who've been thrown out with the trash, seats them among the honored guests, a place of honor among the brightest and best.***

***He gives childless couples a family, gives them joy as the parents of children.***

*Hallelujah!*

This week my eyes were again opened with what I experienced during the time I spent at Mission of Hope. They were opened to the reality that not everyone has compassion for the poor. They were opened to the reality that people are uncomfortable with those who might look, think, or act differently than we look, think, or act.

We received a complaint from someone about "those people" standing out front of the building Mission of Hope occupies. This same person complained to the police, which prompted a visit from an officer on Wednesday. He and I had a lengthy conversation about the Mission, the people we serve and the work that is being done, the potential future of Mission of Hope, and discussed some things we could do out front for the betterment of everyone. It was encouraging to hear that this officer believes in what Mission of Hope is doing and what it stands for.

No decisions were made at that point, but through our conversation, I was reminded of many Scripture passages that speak of helping the poor, the needy, the fatherless, and those who are considered the least, the last and the lost. One such Scripture is at the beginning of this post.

Sure, when you drive by Mission of Hope, you'll most likely see people out front. You might see some having a cigarette, or some standing out there shivering in the cold. You may see some having a conversation with another, or some smiling, laughing or joking around. And because some of these friends of ours may look or act different than you or I look or act, we become uncomfortable and they become threatening to us, and we may label them as "those people."

I will be the first to admit I used to be one who thought that way...until I got to know "those people." "Those people" have become my friends...the ones who I think about when I'm not at work, and the ones whom I pray for. They are the ones I love to have conversations with,

because they expand my thinking. They are the ones who are thankful for Mission of Hope, because without it, where would they go to get help and to feel welcomed, not judged and "normal?"

Some of "those people" have had traumatic accidents or situations in their lives where they have experienced permanent brain damage, and possibly their brains don't work like yours or mine. One man this week shared with me he was in a motorcycle accident 19 years ago, and it was damaging enough that he shouldn't have lived through it. But ever since, his brain "doesn't work like it used to." And watching him at the Mission, you can tell that he struggles at times. Because of this though, does he no longer deserve to be treated with respect, kindness, and compassion? My heart is tender towards him because I know some of his story and some of what he struggles with.

Some have experienced more emotional trauma than you or I could ever imagine. Some have experienced incredible loss in their lives...loss of loved ones, jobs, possessions, homes, freedom, innocence, integrity, dignity, and the list goes on. Some of made terrible choices in the past, and are reaping the consequences from them, even if they are trying to turn their lives around. Many are more resilient than I could ever dream of being.

We encourage our friends not to loiter out front. We encourage them to get involved in the work that's being done inside the Mission...to give them a sense of purpose and a feeling of giving back. At the same time, we try to build them up, encourage, and help in the ways we can. We feel we are doing what Scripture says we should do...we are focused on following God's example in caring for the poor:

***"He picks up the poor from out of the dirt, rescues the wretched who've been thrown out with the trash, seats them among the honored guests, a place of honor among the brightest and best.***

***He gives childless couples a family, gives them joy as the parents of children."***

God loves each one of us. He created each one of us. In this new year, I pray we will all begin to see those who are different than us through different eyes...through eyes of compassion, respect and love. May we each follow God's example of caring for the poor this year!!