

A Meal for the Preacher

Years ago, a Missouri country congregation listened to a sermon by a young preacher who had walked 20 miles to deliver it. Tired and hungry, the young man faltered, floundered and failed as he attempted to present the message. The people were disgusted; they did not know he was weary from walking all those miles.

When the service was over, nobody offered the preacher food or shelter. Still hungry and disappointed because he knew he had not connected with his audience, he started down the long road home with a breaking heart. But before he got off the church property, the janitor caught up with him and invited the preacher to share his humble meal in the nearby shanty where he lived.

Years passed. The young exhorter grew in responsibilities and prestige, and became Bishop Marvin of worldwide reputation. A generation later, he stood on that same spot where he had preached as a young man. This time, he was there to dedicate a great country church.

With his fame, the whole community was assembled; indeed, people gathered from miles around for this occasion, and primarily to see and hear Bishop Marvin. It was to be a tremendous event in their lives. When the service was ended, many crowded around the speaker, offering lavish hospitality. To have the bishop come to any house would result in esteem for the host family.

But the bishop waved them all aside, and called to the old janitor far back in the crowd to come forward. "When I was here years ago, I was none too good for you, and I am none too good for you today," he said. "I would be pleased to share another meal with you in your home."

Simple acts of kindness register in the souls of those who receive them. And they may be repaid at critical, and surprising, times.

– Beecher Hunter