

Love for God, Love for Neighbors

An Irish legend tells about a king who had no children to succeed him on the throne. So, he had his messengers post signs in every town and village of his kingdom inviting qualified young men to apply for an interview with the king.

This way, the king hoped to be able to choose a successor before he died.

Two qualifications, especially, were stressed. The person must have a deep love for God and a deep love for his neighbor.

A young man saw one of the signs. He, indeed, had a deep love for God and neighbor. He felt a kind of inner voice telling him to apply for an interview. But the young man was so poor that he didn't have decent clothes to wear to an interview. He also didn't have any money to buy provisions for the long journey to the king's castle.



So the young man prayed over the matter. He finally decided to beg for the clothes and the provisions he needed. When everything was ready, he set out.

After a month of travel, one day the young man caught sight of the king's castle. It sat high on a hill in the distance.

At about the same time, he also caught sight of a poor old beggar sitting by the side of the road. The beggar held out his hands and pleaded for help. "I'm hungry and cold," he said in a weak voice. "Could you give me something warm to wear and something nourishing to eat?"

The sight of the beggar moved the young man. He stripped off his warm outer clothes and exchanged them for the tattered old coat of the beggar. He also gave the beggar most of the provisions he had been carrying in his backpack for the return journey. Then, somewhat uncertainly, he walked on to the castle in tattered clothes and without enough food for his return trip.

When the young man arrived at the castle, guards met him at the gate. They took him to the visitors' area. After a long wait, the young man was led in to see the king.

He bowed low before the throne. When he straightened up, the young man could hardly believe his eyes. "You were the beggar beside the road," he said.

"That's right," said the king.

(more)

“Why did you do this to me?” asked the young man.



The king said, “I had to find out if you really did love God and neighbor.”

And then the king told him he had proved himself, and was now the new heir.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus talks about this journey of life we are on, and said:

Then the righteous will answer Him (the Son of Man), saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?” And the King will answer and say to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these, My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matthew 25:37-40 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter