

## *Miracle of a Kind Word*

The Rev. Purnell Bailey tells of a convict from Darlington, England, who had just been released from prison. He had spent three long years in prison for embezzlement, and though he wanted to return to his hometown, he was concerned about the social ostracism and possible ridicule he might have to endure from some of the townsfolk. Still, he was lonesome for his home and decided to risk the worst.

He had barely set foot on the main street of town when he encountered the mayor himself.

“Hello!” greeted the mayor in a cheery voice. “I’m glad to see you. How are you?” The man appeared ill at ease, and so the mayor moved on.

Years later, the former mayor and the ex-convict accidentally met in another town. The latter said, “I want you to know what you did for me when I came out of prison.”

“What did I do?” asked the mayor.

“You spoke a kind word to me and changed my life,” replied the grateful man.

We cannot always know the impact of the seed of a kind word upon the one who receives it. Often, words of encouragement or recognition provide a turning point in a person’s situation or outlook on life.

Just as Jesus spoke with love and acceptance to the hated tax collector, Zaccheus, the mayor set the tone for others’ contacts with the ex-convict by openly and warmly addressing him as a neighbor. People watch those they respect for cues regarding their own relationships with certain individuals.

Genuine, kind words cost the giver nothing, but they can mean the world to the recipient.

Today, don’t be put off when someone to whom you offer a kind word seems uncomfortable or embarrassed. They may be unpracticed at receiving love and compassion, even though they need it greatly.

--Beecher Hunter