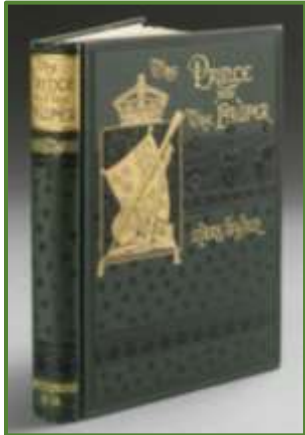


## The Prince and the Pauper

Mark Twain once wrote a fascinating book titled *The Prince and the Pauper*. Set in 1547, it's the story of two boys born on the same day in London, England, who are remarkably similar in their appearance and very dissimilar in their circumstances.



The first boy is named Tom Canty. He is a young man dressed in rags and living in the filth of some of London's worst slums. He is unwanted by his father. He is frequently beaten and is forced to go out during the day to beg for money. But Tom dreams of one day being a person of distinction.

The second boy is Edward Tudor, who happens to be the son of King Henry VIII. As such, he lives the life of a prince, raised in the palace, wrapped in fine silks and protected from the horrible conditions that exist beyond the palace gates. To this point in life, he is oblivious to the misery and injustice experienced by his father's subjects.

One day, Tom, the pauper, sneaks his way into the royal court, hoping to see how royalty lives. He is caught and beaten by the Royal Guards. Seeing Tom's predicament, Prince Edward steps in and takes Tom into his private chamber where he will be safe.

It is there that Tom confesses to Edward his own desires and dreams to live as the better people in society live. At this point, the two boys decide – at least for a while – to switch places. The prince will become a pauper and the pauper will become a prince. And because the two boys are so similar in appearance, they are able to pull it off.

The first thing they decide to do is to switch clothes "temporarily." Ironically, the result is that Prince Edward is mistaken for a dirty beggar and is thrown out of his own palace. When Edward protests that he is in actuality the prince, no one believes him.



At the same time, Tom, now sitting in the palace, knows nothing about being a prince. But because he has such a reasonable, common sense, no one suspects that he is an imposter.

(more)

The story follows the adventures these two boys embark on as they try to reestablish their true identities. Along the way, however, something quite significant happens. This young prince discovers the horrible plight of the poor in London society. In particular, because he spends some time in jail, he learns the harsh, punitive nature of the so-called justice system that is crushing the poor.

As a result, Prince Edward becomes a much more compassionate person. This is fortunate because at the very time he returns to the palace to take his rightful place, his father dies, and he becomes the new king.

In somewhat the same way, Christ came into our world and experienced what it is to be human. The result was that His overarching attitude to almost everyone He encountered was compassion. Remember how He wept over Jerusalem. Remember how Matthew explains His ministry of healing and casting out demons. He writes, "When (Jesus) saw the crowds, He had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd."

Jesus knows what it is to be human, and He feels great compassion for all those who are harassed and helpless or those who suffer in any way.



If we are going to take up our cross and walk in Christ's footsteps – and in the mission to which we are called in Life Care and Century Park – we, too, will need to see the world as He saw it, through eyes of compassion.

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive (Colossians 3:12-13 ESV).*

– Beecher Hunter