

Friday Grind #533 - COMPASSION



It was one of those very large family reunions, where you likely don't recognize half the people, and spend a good deal of your time trying to avoid the pugnacious uncle whose name you've tried to forget. In the midst of the festivities and beehive of activity, a five-year-old boy wanders and mingles. Sitting alone on a bench is one of the clan's matriarchs, a 90-year-old woman. The boy didn't know this woman, so walked right up close and stared into her deeply lined, wrinkled face and cloudy blue eyes. After some time, he asked, "If you're so old how come you're not dead?" She laughed, and replied, "Well, young man, you'll have to believe me that I've thought about it. Many times. But every time I get ready to just go into my room and lie down and die, somebody asks for a sandwich. And I get up and go make it for them. After a while you realize that there are a lot of hungry people and many sandwiches to be made. I guess with making sandwiches I just haven't had time to die."

Ahhh yes, I do my best to lift other up. I love this story. Makes me smile every time. And gives me hope. And if you change the verb, it applies to any one of us. "Every time I get 'ready to'... quit or give up or give in or fold or break." Even if we don't wish it.

Here's the deal: There is nothing small about compassion. It is the thread of life woven through each day.

When the world feels small and dark and frightful, at the mercy of cruelty and revenge, it is not surprising we choose to protect our hearts. We do not easily give

it away. This happens when we live from the notion that we carry only so much emotional capital—you know, that precious commodity which allows us to pay attention, to focus, to contribute, to care, to forgive, to set free.

Or, drawing from Luke's Gospel. "To stand up for the neglected, to invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind." And when we live as if there is a scarcity in our "caring commodity", it goes without saying that conservation is called for. And it becomes our default.

Meaning, there is no need to spend empathy on just anybody. We need to pick and choose. To be blunt, "there are those who deserve care, and those who don't."

Bottom line: we lose track of the values that sustain us.

And sometimes, we need an experience, to rock our world. Or, to invite us to hit the reset button. You know, back to what makes us human.

I think I needed it this week.

So. What will I choose to care for—to be loving and kind in today's world?

What will I choose to say matters?

In what ways can I say No to apathy and indifference and resignation?

In what ways can I say Yes to, "I do my best to lift others up."

There is nothing small about making a difference in the life of one human being. As humans—in the image of God—we touch, love, give, lift up, heal and redeem.

The MI Primary is in August - be sure you are registered and put it on your calendar to vote. It is a PRIVILEGE.

Prayer (poem) for our weekend...

When the world feels hopeless and
heartless,

take a moment to look around.

There are beautiful humans everywhere,
often hiding in plain sight in cabs,
on buses, in cafes, on trains, in libraries,
on park benches, in laundromats, on
subways.

They may not be rich or well-educated.

They may be broken and hurting
themselves.

They may not have much to offer
in terms of worldly goods.

But they are the comforters, encouragers,
sharers, teachers, servers, healers,
mentors, connectors, helpers, and
counselors who keep the random hurting
humans, the weary and the lost, the
invisible sufferers who walk among us
every day, going just long enough
to find their hope and strength again.

It doesn't take a degree or wealth
or a grand gesture to make a
difference in this world.

It just takes a human who cares.

-L.R. Knost