

Saving Mankind – Christ’s Act of Kindness

A while back, there was a news story about how some 400 people who visited a Starbucks’ drive-thru were shown acts of kindness thanks to one stranger who paid for another’s caramel macchiato at 7 a.m. According to the news report, this one random act of kindness kick-started a pay-it-forward chain that lasted until 6 p.m. that day—with each driver paying for the order of the person in the car behind them.

We’ve all heard of similar stories—people *‘paying it forward’* after someone displays an act of kindness toward them. And, whether it’s done out of guilt or a sense of obligation, the recipient typically regards it as an act of kindness.

Jesus’ entire ministry was an act of love and kindness, and the greatest act of kindness was the sacrifice He made on the cross to *save mankind*. He came to earth, became human, and subjected Himself to painful humiliation, suffering and death for us. This was the ultimate act of love and sacrifice! In return, He simply asks that we ‘pay it forward’ by loving God *and others*. In Mark 12: 29-31, Jesus said, “... *love the Lord God with all your passion, prayer, intelligence and energy.*’ And *‘Love others as well as you love yourself.’*

Why, then, do we find it so difficult to love others? Why is it that when we engage in an act of kindness we expect something in return—recognition, a *‘thank you,’* money, mention, or some show of appreciation? Why do we become irritated when we allow a car to go ahead of us and they don’t give us the ‘obligatory wave of appreciation?’ When we hold a door open for someone and the person doesn’t acknowledge it with a ‘thank you,’ why are we offended? We expect our simple, insignificant acts of kindness to be rewarded with gratitude, appreciation and sometimes fanfare, yet we take Christ’s sacrifice—His act of kindness of saving mankind—for granted.

As we emerge from this season of Lent, in preparation of the celebration and commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, this is a great time to reflect upon Christ’s Act of kindness—*Saving Mankind!* It’s also a great time for us to take stock of

ourselves, our lives and our walk with Christ, so that we can honor and reverence Him, while showing appreciation for His sacrifice.

Lately there appears to be a spirit of hate and rancor hovering over our communities across the nation, and we see it manifested daily in negative behaviors that are becoming increasingly overt. We see it on social media, television and hear about it in our neighborhoods. We've all seen the images of chaos of people running out of Jewish Community Centers because of bomb threats. Heinous crimes are being committed in neighborhoods and cities—right next to us. And, daily people are doing hateful and hurtful things to one another.

Thankfully, we also notice those among us who are determined to model Christ's act of kindness. We see it play out in the innocence of youth—like little, six-year old Armani Crews who gave up her birthday party so she could feed the homeless. Or, we witness students in Loudoun County, VA who volunteered their time to repair and help restore an old, historic African American schoolhouse after another group of youth marred it with hate messages. We hear about communities coming together to surprise disabled veterans by making their homes handicap accessible. We also see it in our churches, where members secretly and quietly slip a few dollars in the hands of struggling college students; men volunteer to spend time mentoring young boys, or individuals stay after worship services to help clean up the church. These acts of kindness occur daily among individuals who have a desire and heart to emulate Christ.

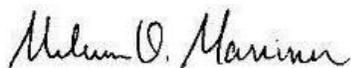
Acts of kindness can be simple, effective, and a great way to demonstrate Christ's love for us, *to others*. Most times true acts of kindness are clandestine—*not for show*—and carried out in genuine love and care for another. In other words, there is nothing to gain. Or, is there? Ephesians 4:32 (ESV), tells us to “*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*” And in Luke 6:38 (ESV), we read, “*Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.*”

Christ's act of kindness toward mankind can never be repaid, but that should not stop us from *trying* to live a life worthy of His sacrifice. We have all heard the saying, "*don't tell me, show me.*" If we profess to love our Lord and Savior, how are we demonstrating that love on a daily basis? Do we spend time with Him? Do we have a desire to learn about Him and His characteristics (reading the Bible)? Do we listen to what He has to say to us (quiet time)? What do we do to please Him? How often do we speak to Him (prayer)? Do we desire to emulate Him? If we want to have a true and loving relationship with Christ, we can show it by developing a genuine, loving, lasting and deep relationship with Him.

If we want the blessings of God, then we must learn to trust, love and obey God; that comes when we spend time with Him, getting to know Him, and learning who He is, not just what He can do for us. In other words, this kind of love and appreciation comes when WE become spiritually mature. Remember, Jesus didn't come into the world ready to be crucified on the cross. He had to wait, grow and mature, until it was time.

Each day Christ grants us grace, unmerited favor (God's riches at Christ's expense). There is nothing we can do to deserve the grace that is extended to us, but every now and then we should remind ourselves of what God has already done for us; what He has sacrificed for us. We must remember His act of kindness—*saving mankind*—and ask ourselves if we are deserving of that depth of sacrificial love.

Peace and power,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melvin O. Marriner".

Dr. Melvin O. Marriner
Senior Pastor Grove Church