Shameless

How Love Defeats Shame

By Laurie Hampton

*Whoopie! I scored three quarters, three dimes and 16 pennies. I usually only find pennies in the Nichols fountain. No one carries change any more. I could smell the onions frying at Winstead’s, I would love to order a burger with extra onions, but I couldn’t even get the Jr. Burger for $1.21. They feed fries to the birds, but a woman dressed as I am makes them roll up their windows and look away quickly.*

*Maybe I could sneak in the bathroom before the car hops notice me, it would be nice to rinse my mouth out and wash my face. I am like every other human being, but sometimes I don’t feel like it anymore. For a $1.21, maybe it would be worth the walk to Mike’s to get a mini of my favorite Vodka. It will be a cold night under the bridge.*

*My name is Lindy, in case you were wondering. I have been on the streets for four years; I am an expert on all the things you find awkward to look at. I used to get embarrassed when you would look away, assuming I never noticed how you couldn’t bear to look at me. But I am starting to get used to it.*

*So, let me go ahead and answer the questions you would not dare ask. Let’s start with personal hygiene. I use public bathrooms as often as I can to do a quick wash. I haven’t had a shower in months. My favorite scent is cinnamon; it reminds me of my Grandma. I don’t know what made me think of that.*

*I usually sleep on the streets and avoid shelters. I am scared at night on the streets but not as scared as I am in some of the shelters. Last time I tried to stay at the shelter a guy was harassing me, I think he wanted to try to make money off of me. He kept yelling at the other men to stop looking at me, saying I was his woman. I kept telling him I had no idea who he was, but he just kept insisting I was his girl. I knew what he was up to. It’s so hard; every day is just so very hard.*

*Most people assume I don’t have a political affiliation, but I can assure you I didn’t vote for Trump, and yes, I did vote. Did you know I was PTA President at one time? That was a different lifetime.*

*Well, I have rambled on enough, how about buying a girl a hamburger, extra onions? That’s ok, maybe next time you will have some change on you. Yeah, God bless you too*.

Have you ever considered that Jesus might have been homeless? Think about it, nowhere in the Bible does it mention Him having a house. Also, nowhere in the Bible does it mention Him owning anything other than the clothes on His back.

Matthew 8:20 says “And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’”

So, how does it make you feel to consider that Jesus may have been homeless? Have you ever wondered about how *He* managed hygiene while traveling like a homeless person? Did you ever stop to think about the logistics of having a traveling ministry?

Luke 21:37-38 says, “And every day he was teaching in the temple, but at night he went out and lodged on the mount called Olivet. And early in the morning all the people came to him in the temple to hear him.”

Was this a usual way of living for Jesus? What did he fix for breakfast? What was the best method for starting a fire? Did he carry a backpack or something to keep stuff in?

I think we can assume that in His lifetime, Jesus slept on the hard ground, experienced hunger, endured the pain from being out in the elements, and was perhaps lonely from time to time. So, was Jesus homeless?

I get the feeling He carried little with him and owned nearly nothing in the way of physical possessions. We know that when He was crucified, they divided up his clothes by casting lots. This sounds more and more like the life of a homeless person if you ask me.

Does God ask us to sell our possessions and give to the needy? Does He warn us about the love of money and the problems of possessions?

In Luke 12:33-34, Jesus says, “Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

The more we look at the life of Jesus and His ministry on earth, the more it seems His life has in common with the homeless and poor than the middle-class.

The point I am heading towards is this: how will we demonstrate our love for people? In Jesus’ ministry on earth, He spent time with the messy, the smelly, the sick, the poor, the marginalized, and the vulnerable. He accepted people where they were in life and not only encouraged them to take the next best step towards a better life but got in there and did life with them. He got messy, hot, and smelly. He did not just send them a check or drop off a quick donation and run the other way.

In John 4, we read the story about Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Jesus and His disciples are traveling once again, and as they came to the town of Samaria, they decided to make a pit stop. Everyone was hungry and thirsty and probably needed a bathroom break.

Jesus knew of a good watering hole called “Jacobs Well” and stopped there while His tribe (the disciples) went further into town to get some grub, probably not hamburgers with fried onions, but you get the point. As He sat resting, a woman from Samaria came to get a drink of water. Jesus asked her to grab Him one too. I wonder what the look on the woman’s face was when He dared to speak to her. You see, Jews were not to speak to Samaritans, and men weren’t permitted to talk to women without their husbands present. I dare say, our Jesus was willing to break some rules in the name of grace and mercy, as we are about to see.

Then Jesus turns the tables on her and offers her a drink, but not just plain old well water, but the living water of Christ. The woman is skeptical, as I would also be. She wonders what this man has up his sleeve that could solve her problem of making this journey to the well every day! It is just like us in our human nature to be more concerned with our physical needs than our spiritual ones!

I wonder if Jesus didn’t maybe chuckle a little at the misunderstanding. No, He explains, the water from the earth, you drink and then are thirsty again. The living waters that come from a relationship with the Savior, they will quench your thirst for eternity. Maybe her face fell a little after the explanation; I suppose mine might have. I love an easy answer to a problem.

Jesus then suggests she get her husband and return to the watering hole to learn more about the Living Water plan. Not a strange request as they really should not have been having a conversation without her husband present anyway.

But at this point, the woman confesses what Jesus already knows, that she has no husband. Jesus nods His head and says, He knows she has had five husbands and the man she is with right now is not her husband either.

Now this woman is starting to catch on; she replies, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.” God is not out to bring shame to this woman. He is merely sharing the truth of the matter, that with the life He offers, her past does not matter. She is loved and valued right in this place, and this very moment. He wants to leave her better off than she was before. No quick hand out of a few coins and a God bless you. This is about the relationship, something of higher value than what the world had offered her up to this time.

I wonder if the people who know and meet me throughout my life will see that I am a Christian by my love. If I never say anything about God or church, will they know I am a Christian? Will they know Jesus?

*I found a doorway to sleep in that night. A rare find to have shelter from the elements and a smidge of privacy, a real rare find. I was shocked when I turned around and saw a woman staring at me. I knew she was going to invite me to the shelter for the evening meal. I had seen her on the streets before — one of them “church” ladies.*

*I tried to give her my best “crazy eye” stare down in hopes of scaring her along her way, but she stepped into my space none the less. An intrusion, I did not appreciate, I was hopeful this would be a brief encounter, and I could finish getting situated before the alley started to fill in for the night.*

*I could not believe it; she sat right down on the stoop as if she belonged there! I was genuinely stunned by her audacity to act as if SHE belonged here. I quickly huddled into the corner and started mumbling gibberish while flinging my hands around, most certainly she would leave now.*

*“What time do you get up in the morning, she asked. You see, I thought I could pick you up and take you to the Day Shelter. You could get breakfast and a hot shower as well as a change of clothes. Your bags would be safe there, and then I could bring you back here if you would like.”*

*Hmmmffff…I have heard of this place from a few others. Hope Faith Ministries, sounds too good to be true if you ask me. But they may have fried onions, and a hot shower would be a real treat. I told her I would think about it. She gave me a sack dinner and an awkward attempt at a hug, I didn’t see that coming, or I would have probably tried the crazy eyes again. Finally, some peace, I settled in for the night and didn’t think much more about her offer.*

*Six a.m.. I am gathering my stuff up before the businesses start to open and sweep the alley for any “vagrants.” As my back is turned, I hear her soft voice asking if I am ready to go. I stood there, half stooped over, frozen for a moment as I collected my thoughts along with my bags. I am not sure what possessed me to follow her, but I did.*

*There were no fried onions. But hot coffee and waffles tasted pretty good. I saw some of my friends from the street. Jimmy was shoving waffles in his mouth while visiting with a few other men. Minnie was sitting by herself, just rocking and mumbling as always, but I noticed her hair was wet, and she seemed a little less agitated than usual. Ralphie nodded to me but kept his distance, which was wise.*

*Her name is Angel; she is my friend. We have been having breakfast together every Thursday for two months now. I am thinking about telling her my story someday; she may not flinch as much as think unless of course, I pull out the crazy eyes on her again. We are going to Winstead’s for lunch this week. I didn’t tell her it was my birthday, but maybe, just maybe, God knew.*

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