

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED UPON THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

BEGGARS ALSO NEED YOUR LOVE

Luke 6:30 “Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.”

Intersections of major streets and entrances and exits of strip malls and shopping centers are populated with women and men holding signs asking for assistance. Sometimes these individuals will strategically place young children to tug at your heart to further motivate you to be compassionate and generous. Begging, also known as panhandling, is the practice of imploring others to grant a favor, often a gift of money, with little or no expectation of reciprocation. As the economy worsens begging increases. Social workers say that there is a strong correlation between begging, homelessness and mental illness.

Does Jesus really expect you to give to everyone who begs from you? That is what you read at the top of this devotion. These words were spoken by Him. Can He be serious? Does Jesus support indiscriminate giving that fosters laziness or where you become a supporter of alcoholism and drug addiction? The verb in this sentence is in the imperative (command) voice.

Jesus is addressing his followers, not the beggar. His words do not concern themselves with the motivation or life style choices of the beggar. Those who follow that way of living are accountable to God in how they live their lives. So, however, are you. It is not love to support someone’s sinful life style. It is not love to ignore the legitimate needs of your neighbor.

What Jesus does say is having a hardened heart, lack of pity, compassion, care and concern for the less fortunate is not the fruit the Holy Spirit produces in a Christian. (Go back and review yesterday’s devotion.) Coupled with selfless love is the wisdom God gives you to learn how to use it properly. Perhaps Luther’s words in his explanation to Commandments 8-10 give appropriate guidance: “We should fear and love God so that we defend (our neighbor), speak well of him and explain everything in the kindest way (explanation to the 8th Commandment); . . . help and be of service to him. . . (explanation to the 9th Commandment); and, “urge him to do the right thing.” [my paraphrase of Luther’s words for the

explanation of the 10th Commandment.] Christian love is “patient and kind. . .” (1 Corinthians 13:4)

Prayer: Lord, fill my heart with compassionate and kind love for my neighbor. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Love in Christ is strong and living, Binding faithful hearts in one;
Love in Christ is true and giving. May His will in us be done.

Love is patient and forbearing, Clothed in Christ’s humility,
Gentle, selfless, kind, and caring, Reaching out in charity.

Love in Christ abides forever, Fainting not when ills attend;
Love, forgiving and forgiven, Shall endure until life’s end.
(LSB 707)