

## CHARITY IS BORN OUT OF LOVE & ACTION!

This week I was working on a piece of biblical scripture that comes from the book of Luke 12:13-31 and contains a Jesus parable about a rich person who, thanks to a bumper year was about to become even wealthier. Their life's purpose and focus seemed to be to accumulate as much as possible for themselves. This figure in Jesus' parable reminded me of the story of Edith. *"Edith lived in a little world, bounded on the north, south, east and west by Edith."* I think we all know people who live their lives like that.

I feel certain that Jesus was not condemning financial success and its benefits. Instead I believe that he was asking the listener (and later) the reader (that's us) to consider what is done with the results of labour and financial gain that may follow.

Someone once asked John D. Rockefeller (of all people) 'how much wealth does it take to satisfy a person?' He replied, *"Just a little bit more."*

Several years ago two of the wealthiest people in the world, Mr. Bill Gates the founder of Microsoft Corporation and Mr. Warren Buffet, financial guru for almost 7 decades, made an amazing and unique pact. Mr. Buffet had said that his family were well taken care of and had no need for the \$44 or more billions of his personal estate. He decided to entrust \$37 billion of that enormous wealth to a philanthropic foundation that had been established by Mr. Bill Gates and his wife Melinda. Together these amazingly successful people make an awesome partnership. They have two simple values that lie at the core of the foundation's work:

- All lives—no matter where they are being lived—have equal value.

- To whom much is given, much is expected. (This is almost a direct quote from the Bible Luke 12:48 *"And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required."*)

This week I was introduced to a young lady called Clarissa who is about 24 years of age. Clarissa works in a retirement home for elderly ladies, helping wherever she is needed. When we spoke she began to tell me about herself, and an amazing story unfolded. For the past two years, at her own expense, she has travelled to Africa to work with the poor and underprivileged...and there are millions of them in central Africa. She admitted to me that she feels called to do this and will be going back again for a few weeks this November to an AIDS orphanage camp for young children. Clarissa banks all her holiday time and then adds some unpaid leave of absence so that she can spend as much of her time there among people who have great need and so little opportunity of helping themselves. She also told me she will be taking an old suitcase which she will fill with items like child's flip flop sandals and writing materials...all to be distributed among the children of the orphanage. This is surely one young person who is making a difference in the world.

The interesting thing about Clarissa's adventure this year is that the camp she chose for her work is in Kenya and exists thanks to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Our world and indeed our own community is made up of a rich mélange of differing abilities, skills and needs. It always has been that way and **probably always will be that way** UNLESS we can find ways to encourage and educate the children of marginal families so that they will be able to be more productive and thus... self-sustaining. One of the building blocks of this strategy is to ensure there exists an affordable home and a healthy diet.

I am reminded of Corinthians verse 14 which says:

*"At the present time YOUR plenty will supply what THEY need so that in turn THEIR plenty will supply what YOU need..... Then there will be equality."*

Charity not only begins in our home communities...it begins as a feeling inside our hearts that refuses to be judgmental and instead lives in the arms of tolerance, forbearance and benevolence shown towards others. Life according to Jesus is more than possessions.....much more, and what we do with our own lives is a reflection on our relationship with our Creator. Clarissa knows just how this feels.

Blessings,

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