
❖ Restoration Village ❖

July 2011

“[The will to embrace is] the will to give ourselves to others and ‘welcome’ them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, [it] is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity. The will to embrace precedes any ‘truth’ about others and any construction of their ‘justice.’ This will is absolutely indiscriminate and strictly immutable; it transcends the moral mapping of the social world in ‘good’ and ‘evil’”.

(Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*)

A MEAL WITH THE OTHER

Miroslav Volf describes that... “the heart of the Christian ethic as one of embrace.”

Jesus’ ministry exemplified a strong case for embracing and solidarity with people often by sharing a meal with them. I sometimes think that the ministry of table fellowship was a simple, mundane revolutionary expression of welcome and embrace to all those who shared in the meal(s). Some observers used those times to be critical that “he eats with sinners and tax collectors.” Another time He shared a parable that since others are too busy to come to a banquet that the servants are to go out and invite the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind, and compel them to attend. One of the aspects of love seems to be about *contact, a touch, a meal.*

Sitting on a retainer wall, waiting for some of our family to arrive for dinner, a young lady with a little child following along behind her walked slowly by and our eyes met. I know the look, and quickly engaged in a conversation for I perceived that she was homeless, probably financially restricted and would be in need. After a short conversation, I asked her if she and the child had eaten, she said “no”. Beverly took her to a street restaurant and told the waitress to get her and the child anything they wanted to eat. Beverly stayed with her awhile, learned of her story, and shared with her. They were going to be in a safe place that evening and we made sure they had the funds to get to that safe place. We have heard from her since we met, she was offered a chance to come to Arkansas and stay at the Village, but she is not ready yet to leave the only life she is comfortable with, living on the streets, surviving. The fact that she did call us, means that grace and hope can and will work in their lives. But it started with an invitation to a meal, a willingness to embrace without judgment from us and the rest of the story is still to unfold.

Reflecting upon the loneliness, the disenfranchised, the lives that we come into contact with here at the Village, it seems that God’s grace wanted me to make sure that we were living what we believe. That particular week after meeting the young mother and her child I was reading a collection of short stories entitled *Winesburg, Ohio* by Sherwood Anderson. I thought that one of the most powerful closing sentences of a short story was written in the chapter, “Adventure”: “What is the matter with me? I will do something dreadful if I am not careful, she thought, and turning her face to the wall,

“[The will to embrace is] the will to give ourselves to others and ‘welcome’ them, to readjust our identities to make space for them, [it] is prior to any judgment about others, except that of identifying them in their humanity.”

Restoration Ministries, Inc.
2215 Little Flock Dr.
Rogers, Arkansas 72756
(479) 631-7345
Fax: (479) 631-9011
restore89@cox.net

Executive Directors

David and Beverly Engle

Board of Directors

Bill Gillingham, PhD (ret.)
Licensed Professional Counselor
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Tom Hatley, ThD
Immanuel Baptist Church
Rogers, Arkansas

Richard Knight, MD
Southwestern Seminary
Fort Worth, TX

David Layman
Layman’s Incorporated
Springdale, Arkansas

Robert Ryan
Outreach Director
Church at Pinnacle Hills
Rogers, Arkansas

began trying to force herself to face bravely the fact that many people must live and die alone, even in Winesburg.” I just sat there saying to myself, “change the word to America or the world, live and die alone.”

“The difference between how a person treats the powerless versus the powerful is as good a measure of human character as I know” writes Bob Sutton in his best selling business management book, *The No A***** Rule*. The examples of Jesus treating other people and his opposition are plentiful: a paralyzed man is lowered through the roof of a house (come on, would you not be upset if a group of men chopped a hole in your roof?) and interrupted the teaching lesson. But not Jesus; a Canaanite woman harassed Jesus and the disciples to heal her daughter. Interruption? Not to Jesus; children being brought to Jesus and the “disciples rebuked them”. Interruption? Not to Jesus; Blind men from Jericho annoyed the crowds with their distraction and relentless cries. Not to Jesus; blind Bartimaeus shouting out, “have mercy on me” and many rebuked him and told him to be quiet. Interruption? Jesus said “call him.”

Last Easter, a church in Matthews, North Carolina “...abruptly escorted out “... twelve year old Jackson Helms and his family after he voiced his own version of “Amen.” His mother was told by some employees of the church that the church focuses on worship, not ministries, “offering a distraction-free environment for all our guests.” Jackson Helms has Cerebral Palsy. At the present time I understand the church staff is taking some training courses on referring others to community resources and I am not very impressed. Distractions are messy.

There has been a lot of theodicy lately to explain the earthquakes, nuclear meltdowns, tornados, floods, tsunamis, and even droughts and it is good that some are attempting to defend God. Though I know God needs no defense (see the book of Job). But it seems that most of the theodicy speakers leave me with the feeling that God is heartless or at least deficient in planning for the universe. There is no simple explanation for all the terrible events occurring in this day and age. And the events do demand our empathy and our aid as best we can do and afford. But our ongoing presence and self giving in our endeavors with the “other” in their moment of pain, loneliness, catastrophes, sorrows, or suffering are best met with being with them. As C.S Lewis once stated, the best answers don’t do as much good for a person in pain as a dose of courage does.

Walt Whitman wrote a poem, *Song of Myself*, one of the verses reads:

“This is the meal pleasantly set...this is the meal and drink for natural hunger,
It is for the wicked just the same as for the righteous...I make appointments with all,

I will not have a single person slighted or left away,
The keptwoman and sponger and thief are hereby invited...the heavy lipped slave is
invited...the venerable is invited,

There shall be no difference between them and the rest.”

For 22 years that pretty much wraps up the welcome of the “meal times” and fellowship of the invitees of Restoration Village. The wonders of restoration unfolding in their lives, the stories of newness even after leaving the Village, the rebuilding of a new life story out of the wreckage of the past, the interruptions that offered hope to the interrupter continue the adventure of “**welcome and embrace.**”

Thank you for helping us keep the “supper on the table”,

David Engle

“The difference between how a person treats the powerless versus the powerful is as good a measure of human character as I know.”

Village News

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY HYMN-WRITER AND EX -SLAVE TRADER John Newton marveled at the far-reaching implications of these words: “One would almost think that Luke 14:12-14 was not considered part of God’s word,” he wrote, “nor has any part of Jesus’ teaching been more neglected by his own people. I do not think it is unlawful to entertain our friends; but if these words do not teach us that it is in some respects our duty to give a preference to the poor, I am at a loss to understand them.”



As mentioned in the body of the newsletter – our guest for dinner was this mother and her young son. God knows where they are, just pray with us that someone else comes along to minister unto her.

THE WINDS DID BLOW UPON THE VILLAGE IN JUNE:

The Village received some damage in the late night wind storms last month. A tree limb crowned one of the resident’s automobile which we cut and moved ourselves. We have repaired the damage to her automobile. The library part of the chapel didn’t do so well. Four holes through the roof, severe sheetrock damage on the inside, water damage (no books or pictures were damaged), one of the trusses was bent (engineer has not been here to survey yet) and of course the big tree needed to be removed. At press time we have not received any appraisal figures from the insurance company, but we have done what we need to do to protect the building. These things happen and we get up and keep moving on.





JULY 4TH IS AN ANNUAL FUN TIME HERE AT THE VILLAGE. Residents, former residents, family, guests and surprise guests drive in and out most of the day. Shrimp boil, homemade ice cream, fireworks, games, fishing, and sitting in the shade are a part of the whole day of memories. This year we made up some t-shirts with names on it and one t-shirt to represent the Marine cousin (our grandson) who is serving in Afghanistan. We are going to send him a group picture of us all to say “hello and God Bless you.” This is the second consecutive year in the last 19 years he has not been with us for a July 4th because of his service in the Marines.

THE TOP OF THE TREE FALLS as we prepare for a professional tree “carver” who is spending the weekend of the fourth with the Village to carve out an eagle at the top of the stairs between the memorial garden and the main lodge. The carving is a gift to the Village and we will share some pictures of the progress on the web page and in the August newsletter.

