



December 2017

“The one who is the true light,
who gives light to everyone,
was coming into the world.
John 1:9 (NLT)

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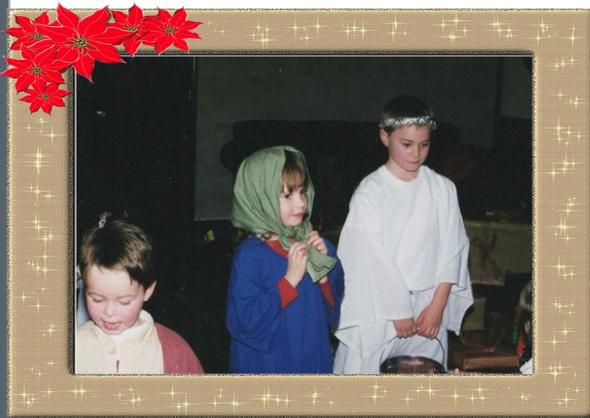
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To Those Who Count the Most

Christmas pageants, those special events during the month of December when children dress in bathrobes, carry a large stick, and come to the manger scene as shepherds, cause us to smile. As the angels proclaim “Fear not,” an adult shepherd appears on the stage holding a lamb with a strategically placed diaper. Shepherds must be important, godly, and good, after all they were the ones in the fields guarding their sheep by night when the angels announced the Savior’s birth. Right?



Wrong!

Shepherds were most likely at the bottom of society’s list of acceptable people. Shepherds were hirelings. They were overworked and underpaid watchers of sheep. They lived outdoors, smelled like the animals they watched over, were uneducated, and were most likely treated as outcasts and second-rate citizens. According to the religious community, shepherds were officially labeled as “sinners” and they were despised within the culture.

Too often I observe that the criteria for acceptance is “you need to clean up your act first, then we might accept you.” When we observe or meet someone for the first time, we quickly make judgements based upon the way they dress, whether they have tattoos and/or piercings, their hairstyle, their ethnicity, the neighborhood they live in, financial position, denomination, you get the idea. Just this morning, I overheard an exterminator that was performing a bug inspection of one of our rooms make a negative judgment regarding one of the Village mothers based upon the untidiness of her small room that she shares



Jesseka's Story

"But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks." Psalms 107:41 (NIV)

This verse was one of several Bible promises that God shared with David and Beverly over the twelve years they looked for the property and the fulfillment of God's vision to "Restore". For many, the road to Restoration Village was a long one wrought with challenges beyond what most of us could imagine. It is those challenges we hope to help residents overcome. Jesseka and her mother shared what the last four years were like for them and how the Village helped their family come back to center.



My daughter Jesseka and Restoration Village: A Mother's Reflection by Debbie Borman



It all started with that phone call in October 2016 that no parent wants to receive, the call Jesseka made telling us that she was in jail and the children had been taken by DHS. My first instinct was to rush to her aid, but my husband said "no". It was time for her to grow up and to start dealing with her issues while our focus needs to be on the kids. So we made the decision not to bail her out and to start the process of getting all four grandchildren placed with us. We both felt that this would be the best decision to start Jesseka on the path she needed to get clean and sober, and to make sure the kids were taken care of. Don't misunderstand, emotionally we were there for her, but in a very different capacity than we had ever been before, at an arm's length and with open eyes.

Fast forward about 7 months and while Jesseka has remained clean and sober, her current living

arrangements were moving from shelter to shelter. The children are living with us under DHS requirements and we were starting to make plans for the children to live with us permanently. Even though she had remained clean and sober, and had gotten her medications situated, she still had no idea of what she was going to do to reunite with her kids. As a mother it was very hard to not swoop in and fix everything, but this is what I had done in the past and it had not truly helped anyone in the long run. Then our prayers were answered, and we all got the best news possible; Jesseka had been accepted to move into Restoration Village.

Like a gift from heaven and for the first time in this entire process, we all thought "ok", Jesseka has a chance now to succeed. While she was receiving the counseling and the other services offered there, Jesseka started having short overnight visits with her kids and started learning the process of how to be a parent. Eventually her visits with the children got to extend over weekends. Both my husband and I could see how she was benefitting from living at Restoration Village. We were beginning to see a complete turn around from the young woman that called us from jail in 2016. The support of the staff and of the other residents has helped show Jesseka she is not alone in this journey.

On October 9, 2017, Jesseka was awarded full custody of all 4 children and her case was closed. Restoration Village made sure they had space for the children so they could come home to their mom. **I can honestly say that had she not had Restoration Village by her side then and now, we would not be at this point. The structure and services that Restoration Village provides will be essential to Jesseka for her success as a parent and I am so very thankful that they are there.** Jesseka has been clean and sober for over one year now and is so very different from that individual we knew a year ago. And while I know that she still has a way to go, I believe now that she will become the parent and mentor that her children should have. Not only do the children have their mother back, my husband and I have our daughter back.



My journey to Restoration Village: Part One by Jesseka Cline

This is the journey I have been on for the last 4 years and while it hasn't been easy, it has brought me to where I



am today by the grace of God. Four years ago I came to a cross roads. My marriage was not going well, I had three kids I was practically raising on my own, and I was faced with the choice of either ending my marriage or joining along in the extracurricular activities my husband was doing. It seemed easier at the time to occasionally partake and I thought I had it under control. That is until it became an everyday thing and I lost my very well paying job and soon after our house. At this time, we were forced to move in with my husband's parents and the using got worse. Fast forward two years and I was a full blown addict barely managing life while trying to support our habit and raise three children. I attempted to go to school, but my addiction came first and I dropped out. So now I was a 25 year old mother of three, unemployed, a college drop out, and barely functioning. My marriage was crumbling into pieces at this point, barely hanging on by a thread. Things between us had become unbearable. For a long time I put up with the abuse thinking I just made him mad or if I hadn't have said that one thing then he wouldn't have reacted the way he did. Finally in February of 2015 I hit my breaking point. He beat and choked me, and I took my kids and left.

Not long after, I started seeing an old friend who would soon become the father of my youngest child. We had been friends for about 7 years and he was great around my kids and I thought he was a good person. We drank a lot together which is how I ended up pregnant with my youngest child. Things were hard when I got pregnant, as we had been drinking daily and

using prescription drugs together. I went from an unhealthy marriage to an unhealthy relationship. He continued to use while I was pregnant and it took me some time at the beginning to stop. I wasn't happy about being pregnant. I was scared and there were a lot of complications. I was pregnant with twins and after learning that I had miscarried the second baby at 9 weeks, the remaining pregnancy was very difficult. The next eight months were so hard. The father and I split up and I stupidly went back to my ex-husband. It only lasted a few weeks before he ended up in jail. I spent most of my pregnancy alone and I was often in the hospital due to complications. During one of these visits I learned that the baby was in distress and I was going to be having an emergency C-section.

This was one of the scariest things I have ever been through. It was so fast and sudden. I called my mom even though we hadn't been speaking much and asked her to come be with me. It was heartbreaking, I can't imagine what my mother was going through when she showed up. When my daughter was born she wasn't breathing and her heart stopped. She was rushed to the neonatal intensive care unit. When I woke up the doctors informed me what all had happened and I was so emotional. When they wheeled me to my room, I couldn't believe it, but my mom was there.

to be continued...

As we reflect on 2017 and look forward to the blessings that 2018 will bring we are reminded that we could not have helped Jesseka and her children without the support of contributors like you. **Every gift we receive allows the team at the Village to provide immediate food, shelter, and valuable programs like our Children's Enrichment Program and Equine Therapy.**

We need your help to raise an additional \$50,000 to help us meet our financial year-end goal. **You have the power to change the life of a woman or child in crisis.**

You can make your donation online at restorationvillage.net or by mail with the enclosed Return envelope. **Gifts that are postmarked by December 31, 2017 will support our 2017 year-end goal.**

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with her two boys. That night, when Jesus was born in a borrowed barn and laid in a feed trough, it was the socially despised, the shepherds, that were invited to come just as they were, to witness the greatest event in the history of mankind.

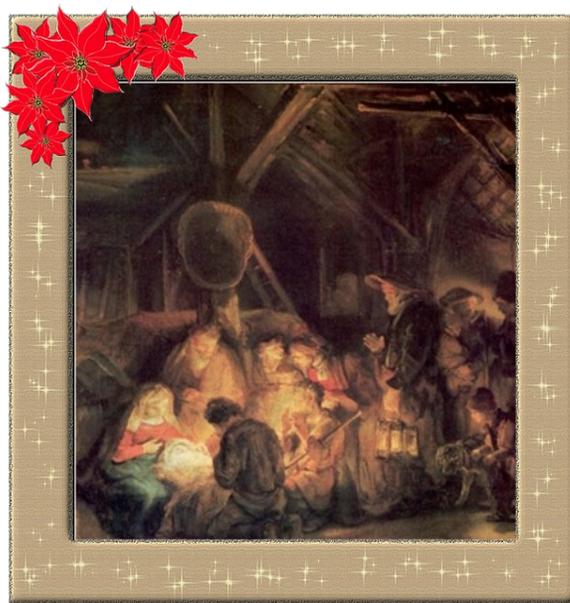
In his book *A Public Faith*, Miroslav Volf discusses a 'hermeneutic of hospitality' and the will to 'embrace.' It is the affirmation of a person's worth, dignity, and humanity prior to any other judgements being made of the person. "The first stance is one of openness, reflecting God's basic stance towards humanity, an unconditional love, imitating God's character and action in Christ, reflecting our own justification by sheer grace." The old covenant required the offering of sacrifices in order to make atonement, you had to clean up your act first before you could come into God's presence at the temple. But the new covenant was introduced the moment that the baby was born to Mary and it was the outcasts who were invited to attend. **Embrace came first, cleansing came second.**

Hospitality, acceptance, and the will to embrace, as set on Christmas morning 2000 years ago, are the declarations of the end of the separation, prejudice, hate, and discord among all mankind. Years ago, I read a Christmas legend that tells of the shepherds that ran on Christmas night to adore the new born child and one of them was ashamed to enter the barn, being that he was so poor he had no gift to offer the baby. Mary desired to welcome them all, but she was holding the child in her arms and unable to greet them. Then seeing the one shepherd outside with his arms empty, she entrusted Jesus to him. To have empty hands was his good fortune. Those we serve here at the Village, those we serve without reservation in the impoverished areas of our city, and those who are often misunderstood, we just embrace by love.

"God travels wonderful ways with human beings,

but he does not comply with the views and opinions of people. God does not go the way that people want to prescribe for him; rather, his way is beyond all comprehension, free and self-determined beyond all proof.... And that is the wonder of all wonders, *that God loves the lowly...God is not ashamed of the lowliness of human beings* (emphasis ours). He marches right in. He chooses people as his instruments and performs his wonders where one would least expect them. God is near to lowliness; he loves the lost, the neglected, the unseemly, the excluded, the weak and broken." (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *God is in the Manager*, reflections of Christmas and Advent)

"And that is the wonder of all wonders, that God loves the lowly."



Rembrandt's masterpiece, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, seems to capture a lesson for us all: the light in which we can see anything is emanating from the manger, and we can only see Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds to the degree that they move closer and can see Jesus. Kindness to all and a willingness to embrace the other first precede cleansing, and the gift of love, one person at a time, changes the world. Move closer to the light of the manger.

Blessings to you this Christmas Season.

David Engle