

The Lord Loves a Generous Heart

Elisha was an itinerant prophet and miracle worker; the successor to Elijah the Prophet. One day, as he was passing through Shunem, a woman offered him a meal. From then on, whenever Elisha was passing through the town, he would stop at the woman's house to eat (2 Kings 4: 8).

Eventually, the woman persuaded her husband to allow her to make up a little room in the house for Elisha so he would have a place to stay during his travels (2 Kings 4: 9-10).

The woman showed herself to be a generous person because, although the Scripture says that she was rich, her affluence could end quickly since her husband was old and she had no son. She would have no one to take of her.

This story of a woman's generosity toward a stranger put me in mind of two incidents that happened to me in my much younger days.

I have written before about a grand road trip in Europe that my friend and I took one summer. We would stay in campgrounds to save money and wash our clothes by hand in the laundry sinks provided. Since we were constantly on the move, we couldn't hang our clothes out to dry during the day. Then, for about three weeks, we had rain every day.

At the end of that time, our damp clothes smelled of mildew. We were in a small town in northern Holland and we asked a woman, that we happened to meet, where we might find a laundromat; somewhere where we could wash and dry our clothes. Ella immediately offered to launder our clothes for us. We tried to refuse but she would have none of it. Ella insisted that we deliver our clothes to her apartment and, the next day, she returned them to us washed and ironed! Ella knew our need and, even though she had never met us before, she immediately offered her help.

The other incident of generosity occurred in a town in Northern Ontario called Iroquois Falls. I was sent there after graduation to work on a construction project. There were no rental accommodations available in town so I had to live in a motel and eat in restaurants.

After several months of that, I happened to meet a lady, Mrs. Latour, who asked me to join her family for dinner. A meal of pork and beans, made from scratch, never tasted so good. Mrs. Latour, a wife and mother of children my age, saw that my situation was not the best so she gave me what she knew I needed.

I am sure that all of us can think of similar examples of generosity that have occurred in our lives; situations where people who we had not met previously went out of their way to serve our needs.

Now these women may not have been Christians. They may have had no faith, although I doubt that. Jesus said: 'whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – that person will not lose their reward' (Matt. 10: 42). Because of her generosity, Elisha promised the Shunemite woman that she would have a son within a year (2Kings 4: 16).

More than forty years later, I still think of Mrs. Latour and Ella. Both of them recognized a need in a stranger and did not hesitate to answer the call. I am sure that, because of their generosity of spirit, they received their heavenly reward.