

(love your neighbor...but who is my neighbor (who is my brother, who is my enemy)?

## “Man with the Tear-Drop Tattoo”

....*"why do you call me, Lord, Lord, but not do the things I say"*

*presumptuous sin? ...hidden iniquity?*

***Psalm 19:13...Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.***

My current work position is a Security Guard, night-shifts (7pm-5am); at an “upper-scale” Shopping Center set in the hills of Oakland, CA. The facility is not large, but not small, just medium size area to manage; mostly as a deterrent to thieves and robbers while keeping the flow of people and traffic. I am no cop, that’s for sure, and for those who know me well they see the irony of it, for me personally working this type of position, for such a time as this. The Lord opened my eyes to come out of the Hi-Tech Silicon Valley “world” and led me here, ...for today, ...learning daily.

This particular night I arrive to work as my co-worker (who covers the day-shift, so I arrive to relieve him), and he is highly flustered trying to “remove” a man that is wandering through the shopping center and will not leave; as my co-worker has asked this man to leave the area, but the man will not. This particular area is not a place to just hang out, or even use bathrooms, as loitering here is technically an offense due to the private property of this particular shopping center. So this night...the offenses fly and the atmosphere quickly turns into chaos and possibly volatile as now this “stand-off” continues.

So, of course now my shift is starting, and because I am there to relieve I will do as needed to do, and walk where I am placed to walk. There is no fear or wavering needed when we are walking simply where we are placed and prepared to walk, (never running ahead but also never hesitating either). So, I simply re-assure my co-worker not to worry and I will talk to the man, and my co-work looks at me with a type of look saying to me...***“you don’t understand, this man has a tear-drop tattoo and he is bigger than you”***....etc, etc. And I smile and re-assure him not to worry, and that I do understand what he is saying but that he does not need to worry. So he says ok and that he will just fall back and watch from a distance then and be a type of “back-up” before he leaves his shift then. So, at this point the man has wandered upstairs to the second-floor balcony, which is the “student center” area, and so I walk over there to just talk with him. As I walk up he is of course already posturing in a “stand-off” to not budge because “no one can tell him what to do”, or... “that he cannot be somewhere” type of stance;...and so he went into that same speech with me and added on top of it now the ...“now how I am also being racist speech” because somehow me being a white girl relates somehow. And well....this is not my first “rodeo”, so to speak, so I already know that tactic and it doesn’t work with me because he does not know me at all; but I take no offense to any of that either,...I just simply let him know...***“it doesn’t matter if your white, black, pink or purple”*** this is not an area you can hang out at and is just as simple as that, ...so if you need help let me know, otherwise you can easily walk outside this center and stand right over there at the gas station next door all night if you like. And not only that, but I am here all night and if he wants to talk I can talk all night of God and the Bible if he is interested. So, as I said these simple things (not condescending but just matter of fact is just how I talk normally) and so his stance changed, and he just shook his head and started to leave the area, not because I wanted him to leave, or that I asked him to leave, but more just that I was now an irritation to him. And it was not that he was really going to leave fully ...but he was backing down from the harder “stand-off” stance now and changing it to a different one.

So my co-worker left but he had already called the cops while he was standing “back-up” before he left. And well, it takes the cops about (6) hours to arrive to the scene in these types of calls, just is what it is in this particular area, and is not the cops fault, just too much high-crime they are dealing with already. So, the man wandered off and disappeared for a while but came back a couple hours later just to test things out again. Seems as if he had little options for where to go this night and it was cold out here and a little rainy and this area seems to be where he was being drawn to. Little do we know exactly why, or what, or how, ...but God does.

So, as it is a couple hours later now it is not so busy here anymore when the man returns, and he comes over to the area I am at with my car in the parking lot and just starts to hang out somewhat. So I offer to him a bottled water and some snack food and he takes it and sets it aside in the corner. I also had a jacket in my car so I asked if he wanted the jacket and he looked at me a bit strange and yet his hesitation broke the ice a little so I handed him the jacket before he could really say yes or no, (he only had a short sleeve t-shirt on and it was cold), and so he took it and it fit him and he was grateful to have it, although few words were really spoken, but then something rather profound was said to me, he said...***"ya know, what do they expect from a starving dog?, ...that it will not turn into a wolf?"***...how profound was that. Hit me rather profound. As the water and food was still sitting there in the corner.

So in any case, he was able to hang out there a little bit while I was working my shift this night, as the restaurant was now nearing time to close. After a short time goes by I get a nudge to give him a Bible. So I look in my car where I normally keep some in there to hand out but this night I had none left like that;... but I did have one Bible left this time in my own bag, and this one was actually my sons' Bible I have been using now, and so I grab that and handed it to the man and said to him ....this was my sons but now it is yours, if you want it....and if not then not. And he looked a little surprised but he took it and put it into his back-pack and said he used to have one long ago.

After this there was not a bunch of talking but more just hanging out as I did my normal patrols as the night went on as usual, but the atmosphere was changing and peace had come back around during this time. (I am learning that we simply do, and then wait, and not worry too much trying to figure it all out.) As I still have my "duty" here for work to patrol the area and keep things flowing and keep trouble out, and so I find myself a little squeezed,... as I know it is best to keep the man near me, keeping myself in between he and the rest of the area, as the rest of the shopping center is then free to do their thing and none take much notice.

And so, for the most part that is how the next hour or so went until the man seemed to get a little bored, and so he went into the restaurant when I was doing my rounds upstairs. He does not cause trouble but walks in the place and says how nice a family there looked as they sat eating, then ordered some soup but left right away before they could bring it out to him. He didn't have any money, he just wanted to be accepted, or noticed, or maybe even a type of scream without screaming in a way of reaching out, testing things maybe a little as well. So, as he came out I was walking back from my patrol to my car and he told me what he did and I told him I would get him some food there but he said no, he doesn't need or want it and that he was heading out now... and so...he left.

I just sat there thinking for a bit, got up and went into the restaurant and told the manager lady that I would pay for the soup so I could make sure he gets it...if he comes back. She said no charge, she would offer it free no problem...but does not want him to know that because she does not want him hanging out there. So I said ok, took the soup and kept it in my car in case he came back again that night. Then she asked me if I would be willing to "escort" some of her patrons to their vehicles when they leave, she said they were now in fear of this man. I said no problem, but I sat now with a hurting heart, both sides are sad to me, the man who scares them and those who are scared of him. All of it could be easily healed and never even needs to exist, yet it does, in so many people and places.

As I later escorted these people to their cars they thanked me for being there; and I was respectful and did my job to help them to their car, but inside I felt pity for them regarding their fear and judgement. Some other people at the restaurant also made comments to me on how even their tallest and biggest guy working there was scared of this guy. But ya know...who is in bonds and captivity then, these "types" they are scared of, or even the one literally in prison... or those outside walking free but walk inside a spiritual prison they cannot see but make for themselves? If we live in fear and eyes of judgement then we can stay blinded in a type of prison, and in doing so may even call fear and trouble upon ourselves causing our own problems that may not have come otherwise, (as if fear and judgement makes a person stand out like a type of "beacon" attracting it upon them). Not saying to walk in ignorance or immaturity, no, just seems to be a difference in all this. Especially when it comes to the worry about our "stuff" here and someone taking from us, but those in worry seem to be the ones with the most "stuff" to lose here; or have an insecurity they do not have enough "stuff" so they always fear losing whatever it is they have. But if someone has nothing left holding power over them like that (or simply cares no longer of things of this world in that way) then we have nothing left to lose but all we have left is

to give, whatever little we have left, and no more worry about “having” or “loosing”, and so fear leaves the more Love fills instead, and Perfect Love casts out all fear, for those with eyes to see.

So, for the rest of this particular night the man did not come back around to the area. The only thing that came here later was a cop (responding to the call about 6 hours earlier my co-worker made) and so they came over and talked with me and I told them what occurred and why they were called out but that all was ok for now. So that was that, and as my shift ended at 5am I am off to head home so I can get my kids to school and go about my day, ...but this man would now be on my heart, and little did I know what the “tomorrows” held....but God did.

The next night I am back to work and I show up to another mess and chaos. This time the man is back and had confronted my co-worker and they had yet another “stand-off”, (and I find out later the man was upset with my co-worker for calling cops on him and wanted to make it worthwhile then as a payback now), ...and so.....this time it came close to being a really bad situation as this man could have done violence to my co-worker who is a younger man with a good heart but still has some things to learn, and my co-worker was no match physically or mentally for this man, not in this way. Many think they are wise and right in their own mind and ways of doing things, but that can be a dangerous way to walk, wise in own eyes can get you a lot of lumps that way, or worse.

And yet...in the middle of this confrontation the man backed down. Later I was shown this on video (cameras are everywhere here), and I could see the escalation of this second “stand-off” and all of a sudden the man said to my co-worker...***“ok, you win, I am leaving”***, and it was strange to see it go down that way, just cut-short like that suddenly in that way, but I was grateful and relieved, but really a bit surprised by it. I could see the man’s desire to be accepted and how hurt he really is from how people treat him and although he had the ability to hurt back...he chose not to this time and walked away instead. My co-worker was still frazzled by it though, and really upset...and angry (but mostly I could see fear in his eyes). So my co-worker leaves and I am on shift now, yet again not sure where the man went off to, or if he would come back later tonight when not so busy here.

He did not come back around this time, but the next day I receive a message from my boss telling me that... ***“if I ever see this man there again that I must call “911” right away, and to not talk with him or entertain him, that he is VERY dangerous and I need to do my job and do as instructed and that I do not realize what these “types” are like and how dangerous they can be.”***

So....,at first my flesh rose up a bit, thoughts coming to my mind...***“so he thinks I am naïve? Or stupid?...does he think it is better to keep pushing against and just call cops and hope they show up in time? Does he really think force is effective or that their methods are working??”*** etc, etc. These thoughts were running in my head, also how my boss really does not know me at all. He knows nothing of my own life and how I used to hang out with these “types” of people and yet, ...in all truth my boss is not wrong ...or right. So, I sat down and cast down my flesh and emotions and thoughts on this, and resisted the temptation to respond on it....other than the typical “yes sir” type of response. (which that in itself was a challenge for me to ever do before, but I am grateful for all that The Lord has been teaching me over the seasons of this walk).

So I spent the rest of the day asking The Lord about all this, how does one do their “duty” and also their “duty”, if that makes any sense. How do I respect those set over me but yet keep The Lord and HIS Voice first. And it came simple then...that is simply what you do, ...you respect the directions given but The Lord’s Voice is who we follow, no matter what, ...even if...even if I lose from it. As that clarity came so did direction as well, specific direction, as I was reminded now...well, who can really help? And thought of the large church my daughter had gone to a little bit ago, they would help him if he was able to get to them somehow. So I looked up the bus schedule and printed out all the bus routes for him to get from my place of work to that large church. It would be a far journey, but not impossible. I printed the church address and info out and wrote a little note on it...***“they care, they can help, there are still some out there that Love Jesus and HE Loves you”***. And I put a little bit of cash folded up with the bus print outs, just enough for bus rides and snack maybe, and put it all into a sealed unmarked envelope. And that was that. If he comes back then I simply hand it to him, if he wants it, ...and if not then not. And if it helps and he goes...then he goes....and if not...then not.

So, I simply let all other things and thoughts on it go and said, ok Lord, whatever comes of this then, whatever it is or is not tonight,... either way I have no idea....(and suppose that is just where HE wants me to be). I am just here, and that is all there is, and if anything else comes up then HE will reveal and I do not need to think ahead on it, just do as led each moment, each opportunity. Sure is more simple and easy to just Follow and obey the calling, but goes against all of my normal nature and can be more challenging, and can take more strength then some may realize, to simply not do what our normal logic and nature wants to do, but only do as led to do, **...nothing more, nothing less.**

As I show up for my shift this night the “atmosphere” is back to its “normal”, although this time my co-worker seems to not like me very much and tells me that he is going to be quitting and is going back to school now. I was relieved for him actually, seems that is best for him, ...although he did not seem very happy with me anymore.

***So I spent the next couple hours in my own “self-pity” for a little while***, thinking on how people around me were looking down on me for the way I handle things, ***or in their eyes... “do not handle things”***. My boss was not happy with me and seemed to be talking down to me as if he thinks I am an idiot, and now my co-worker seemed to also really dislike me. So I started to now question myself and was wondering now if everyone around here also dislikes me or has a lack of faith about my abilities to do the work I am called to do here. Are they still feeling not safe here at night because maybe to them I was not firm and forceful enough?***...but then in what way and to do what...yell at the man? Cause another scene? Or get cops involved again on this?...was that approach helping?*** Seemed not, not in this particular circumstance, but of course this all ran through my head and I found myself standing up on the balcony that night thinking and wondering about it all, wondering where the man was now, asking The Lord to help my heart toward others and for this man, ***...to do only what is right in The Lord’s eyes and not my own...***no matter what, and that I do not want to lean on my own understandings, emotions or thoughts, ...but to simply just do as led, nothing more and nothing less.

The more the night went on I found myself starting to feel rather defeated, wondering if I really did not help anything but now made it all worse. As I sat there for a bit it started raining and the Shopping Center was getting pretty empty as it was late and all shops were closed and most everyone gone. Then I look up and see a dark figure walking up into the parking lot towards my car. A man dressed in dark clothes with a black umbrella covering over almost all of his head as he was walking slowly, (and a rather beat up broken looking umbrella), and the scarf was wrapped all around his face and head and as he came closer I found myself starting to actually laugh a little cuz he looked so silly to me like that because I knew it was him, and so I said to him...***“what are you nuts? Ya know they are just going to move me to some other location and find a more forceful way to not let you come around here at all”***, and he simply stood there and pulled his scarf down under his mouth and looked into my eyes and simply said...***“thank you”***....and I just smiled and then I suddenly remembered the envelope....and so I got it out and gave it to him and just said...***“this is for you, ...if you want it, and if so...it will be an adventure”***, and he took it, and just said again...***“thank you”***, and he went on his way.

He did not come back again that night, and I spent the rest of the night full of Joy and Hope, cuz just when I was starting to doubt....there he is, and there is the envelope sitting there ready for him....purposed, even if, or even if not...whatever comes of it,...as it does not always come the way we think or want it to; or turn out the way we think or want it to, even in the moments of Joy and Hope in Faith that all things are possible, even in that...things still do not always go as we may think or hope them to. But God knows best...we do not...so in all things we must let HIM have HIS perfect work ***...no matter how many “ups and downs” and places of tarry are set throughout the “journey”***.

But this day...nothing could steal my Joy & Hope, not this day, and nothing can take the moment away, even if nothing else comes, so sitting with it all...this comes out to share then,...<https://soundcloud.com/melody-laylay/walking>

...my prayers are now for the man that he takes the “journey”, but that is now in The Lord’s hands, not mine. Only HE can do, and we simply keep Hope and Faith, no matter how it may “look” to us at time. ***But...trials and testing of this Faith will come, as it did ...yet again a couple nights later.***

The next few nights of work my heart was challenged because I was hoping ***not to see him again***, because my hope was that he would leave this area right away and find some real help. Of course from the way “I” thought it would go,

praying for that miracle of the impossible to manifest immediately. And the not knowing was challenging; but that was the point...I would not know, either way;...***if I never did see him again, how would I ever know? ...Was he ok...or other?***

So we go on with our days and nights, we have to, and just keep praying for those we keep in our heart. And so..... a couple nights later he shows up again, ...and my heart sunk a little as if it cracked or something, not because he is here but because I was hoping for a different outcome,...and once again this reveals the depth of my heart...the outcome "I" wanted and hoped for, ***(so there I go once again putting my own desires and hope for what I think would be best...and this part of the walk is where we learn....once again.....it is not about us or about what "we" desire or the "way" we think is best, we simply must walk this out...daily...and each day is a new day, moment, opportunity, and choice).***

So this night, as he is back and comes to talk with me and I asked him ...***"did he find what he needed"***...regarding his broken car or whatever was keeping him around here, and he says...***"yah...my life"*** and I just kind of looked at him funny and he lifts up his pant leg and shows me the ***"ankle-bracelet"*** and tells me how the little bit of money I gave him is what he needed for this opportunity to get this taken care of now, and he wanted to thank me for it. And so we talked briefly and then he went on his way.

I was happy for him but I also did start to wonder and worry...***would he now just stay around here and get into trouble again though? Or would he find other help here then, ...another way?***

Sitting and thinking on it too much now, a little confused and feeling somewhat defeated again....but why? ...was it because of what I thought would happen...and so because it did not happen the way I was hoping and praying for then does that discount all the amazing things that already has been happening ...all along? No way, it should not.

***So again...I am learning...daily.*** And that was the last time I would see him...for a long while.

He would be in my prayers, and some nights at work I would stand up on the balcony again and think on him, wonder how he was doing. But time goes on and things just keep going...and we keep walking it out, whatever the next day may bring on our path.

It had been nearly 4 weeks and he has not been back. Things seem to be just back to the ***"normal...work as usual"***... back to the standard chaotic atmosphere of cars being towed and angry people left there trying to get their car back while the rest of the shopping center is full and busy. So as I pull into the parking lot this particular night my boss is standing there talking to a guy. I figure this is just another person that needs to deal with a tow or whatever it is going on right now.

But then the guy my boss was talking to starts to walk over towards me as I am getting out of my car. And as he gets closer he starts to look a little familiar but I cannot really place him, then all of a sudden I realize who it is...***it's the man!....he is back....***but he is dressed in a nice sweater and slacks (with a name badge on the sweater), and as we are walking towards one another and I start to recognize him I said really loud...***"what! ...no way!!"***...and the man and I give each other a big hug as he has the biggest smile and Joy gleaming off him as he starts to tell me all about his "journey".

So as my boss leaves and the man and I are now standing there in the middle of this parking lot....full of chaos...***and yet none of that matters one bit***, not my boss or the chaos around of angry people, nothing matters but this man and I standing here right now in the middle of it and listening to him now telling me all about how he took the journey, how he now has this great job because someone else also ***"gave him a chance"*** and how he now lives in a shelter with other guys like him and how much better things are now. He spoke about a lady he met that gave him that chance at a job and how she is like an angel to him, and now why he had to come back here and talk to me, and show me, and thank me, and tell me how it made a difference. And I looked at him and said ...***man you are the gift to me***, you just filled my purpose this day and gave me more than you may realize, (Faith to Faith), cuz days can get hard and we can feel somewhat empty and defeated sometimes. He looks at me and intently says...***"never quit what you are doing, never give up on Faith, what you do matters"***....and my eyes got all messed up a little trying to hold back the tears, and he then says...."oh! and gotta show you something else" and he walks over to show me the car he now has and said..."come see what I keep in here with me always"...so I walk over and he shows me my sons bible is right there in between the front

seats is where he keeps it he says...*"I still have it and I keep it right here with me now always, wherever I go"*, and that was over-the-top for me now, ok wow, my son is going to be touched by all of this as well from this man...from this alone, the Faith it pours into others...how it all works together this way, ...words can hardly even express it, no amount of explanation and details can really do this justice, ...for our God is the God of impossibilities made possible...in Faith, and from Faith to Faith it flows, and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is alive and moving in hearts more than we may think or understand.

*All Glory to The Lord God Almighty..."Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me".*

**Isaiah 65:25**...*The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord.*

**Matthew 5:38-45**...*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

**John 10:25-35**...*And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.*

**John 13:34-35**...*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

We Love our Brother and yet our own Brother or Family can also betray us and be our enemy, yet we Love even our enemy. So whether a neighbor or a brother, we do not know who is who...so we Love All and stretch the hand out and pray...keeping Faith in all things, no matter how stretched we may feel at times...seen or unseen, always pointing to Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior...for HE is who we waited for, and HE is who all the world needs to see and look upon.

Sadly, some that do wander the streets can be worn out so much they may consider jail is better than being stuck out on the street and may be looking to do something just to get themselves back into jail where at least they have somewhere to be, and food to eat. Or worse...they may even be looking for another way out, permanently, and may take another with them doing so. Out on the streets at night many judge the "wanderers" and will try to remove them by force. Standard training may call for that and many lean on that alone. Yet, is that the only way? Maybe some of these "wanderers" just need something different, but people and moments are each still unique, ...and there lays the challenge, who can discern it? Are we wise enough in our own minds or strength?

Some moments call for quick and sharp authority while others may call for simple grace and mercy. We choose daily what we serve, how we serve and how we see and hear. One thing is true for all, all need Love, but not man's love, but God's Love. Even amidst a chaotic atmosphere the Power of that Love can do more and accomplish so much more, (although may go against all logic and wisdom of this world in doing so and not always seen as it does work). Words of force can say to a person "by law you cannot be here or do that"...but that usually does very little, pointing it out is rarely effective as usually they already know what they are doing wrong, and although you can be a deterrent for a moment, temporary results have no real solution, just keeps something maintained for a season or time... but only eternal works can remain and endure forever transforming a heart eternally, as all other things are temporary and fade away.

Prepared places, prepared hearts...they surround us daily (no matter how wounded, cold and rough these may seem on the outside hidden under a tough exterior). And although God's Love and work to be made manifest seems to tarry sometimes...in patience it will have its perfect and greater work. As Jesus said...when you go out, if peace rests upon the place then tarry there, but if not then not...keep walking and shake the dust off your feet and plow forward.

***...only God can do***

***...all we can do is stand in Faith and Hope, and keep walking it out,***

***"never quit and never stop sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, what you do matters", ...Amen.***