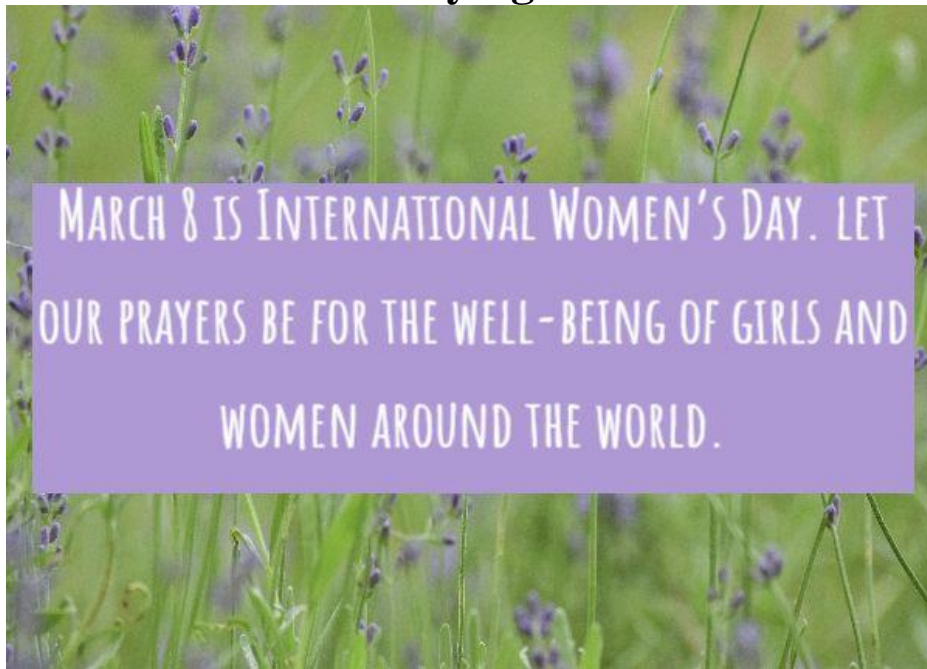


HEARTBEATS-Staying Connected 3-8-21



Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, March 9 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. March 8 is International Women's Day, so this week, let our prayers be for the well-being of girls and women around the world. Give thanks for the progress and triumphs our global community has made for equality and the fair treatment of women. Pray for the end of the ongoing challenges many women face, including violence based on gender.

Continuing on the theme I started this past Friday of seeking to better understand the background for some of what Jesus' says, consider these words: "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well." As I said in my last article, Jesus is trying to empower those who had little or no power.

Many in His day were poor and were at the mercy of the rich. Many people were so poor they had little more than their clothing. So, if they wanted to borrow money from a wealthy person, they only had their garments to offer as collateral. The law allowed a lender to demand that the one who owed money turn over their tunic, mistranslated above as "shirt." This was the garment that was worn against the skin. That left the borrower with the outer garment, translated above as "coat" as clothing to wear during the day. But because the desert became cool at night, the tunic had to be returned by sundown so that the person could sleep warmly.

The lender, though, was legally responsible for the condition of the tunic, and if it was damaged, it had to be replaced.

Some wealthy lenders would use such an opportunity to exert power over the one to whom money had been loaned. The demand for the tunic was made each sunrise, not only to remind the poor person of their debt, but also to embarrass the person in front of others who would see them without their tunic and know that they were poor and had to borrow. Jesus' solution for those abused in this type of situation was to hand over, not just the tunic, but the outer robe too. That may not make sense, but here are the implications of such an act.

First, the one who demanded the collateral now has two garments to look after. His risk is doubled if something happens to the clothing because he is now accountable for replacing both. Second, the removal of both garments would make the borrower, well...naked. To see someone, other than a spouse, undressed was a sin under the law and the one who viewed the naked individual was prohibited from worship for two weeks and at the end of that time, a special offering had to be made. The one wanting the clothing would now be cut off from God for a time and must also suffer the expense of an additional offering. For both reasons, the wealthy person would be likely to shun the demand of collateral going forward.

Today, we do not have such traditions that would place us in this situation. But the practice of offering what we have freely is a principle of the Kingdom of God. It is not a command, but rather an attitude. If someone asks for something, we can consider giving the person more than what is requested. When we recognize that we are not in a position of scarcity, we can follow the Kingdom attitude of love, and ask, "How can I use what God has given me to help provide for this one in need?"

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey