

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 10/9/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, October 10 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for farmers who grow our food. Ask GOD'S blessing upon them especially right now as they struggle to bring in crops after a drought year. Pray that there be enough food for everyone and that it reaches all the places where it is needed.*

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I believe names are important and I try my best to get names correct, though I don't always succeed. I also believe that it is important that we pay attention to the names of the people with whom we come in contact, even those who are serving us. I remember a story about a professor of nursing who, on an exam, asked her students the name of the custodial person who cleaned the building where their class was located. Students protested the question, saying that they hadn't been told that it would be on the test. The professor responded by telling them that, in their profession, it was important to recognize their patients as people and to identify them and get to know them as part of their regimen of care for them. Because of that story, I got in the habit of asking my own children when we were eating in a restaurant, the name of our server after he or she left our table. They soon learned also to get to know people, if only by their name.

I recall serving communion for the first time in a church where I was the newly called pastor. One lady told her adult daughter how special and amazing it was that, when I communed her, I called her by her name. She wondered how I had known her name when I had only been there a few days and never met her before. Her daughter then pointed out that, because it was my first Sunday and to try to get to know the congregation more quickly, they had all been wearing name tags and that I must have read it off her name tag when I communed her.

I've talked before about how names in the Bible, and especially the Old Testament are also important and significant. They often describe the person in a way that helps us to know or remember the person. It's also significant when names or identities are not used. Rob Bell, in What Is the Bible points out that when JESUS told the story of "The Good Samaritan," the lawyer to whom he asked, "Who was the neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers," answers "The one who had mercy on him." But JESUS has been calling him a Samaritan throughout the parable. The Samaritans were so hated by the Jews that the lawyer in the story, like many of JESUS' listeners, won't even use that term to identify the one who helped. Rob Bell also mentions in Love Wins that in the parable of "The Prodigal Son," the older brother, upon his younger brother's return identifies him to his father as "this son of yours." Not "my brother" but "this son of yours."

As I thought about it, it occurred to me that the only person named in one of JESUS' parables is Lazarus. Not the brother of Martha and Mary. In the parable of "The Rich Man and Lazarus," in Luke 16, JESUS gives the beggar at the rich man's door a name. Why is that? HE doesn't name any other character in HIS parables. Only Lazarus. HIS audience we're told consisted of tax collectors and sinners (prostitutes), but also some Pharisees and teachers of the law—people who specialized in studying the laws of the Old Testament and letting people know when they broke these laws. Often, these Pharisees and lawyers were wealthy. Tax collectors were also wealthy, because they overcharged people on their taxes and pocketed the difference themselves, but prostitutes were not. Often, they were prostituting themselves because they had no other source of income with which to survive, except begging. Like Lazarus who was a beggar and who's body was covered with sores. Lazarus was named when the rich man was not. (Some have given the rich man the name Dives, which means "rich," but JESUS doesn't use this name.) It would seem that JESUS chooses to honor the poor and sinners by naming this illustrative beggar while not giving such an honor to the rich man who ignored Lazarus.

We honor people when we do more than just notice them, much less ignore them. We honor people when we take time to learn their names and their stories. We honor people when we recognize that they, like us, are children of GOD and are deserving of the same love and respect that we would want for ourselves. We honor them when we seek to let them know that they are worthy and loved of GOD just as we are.

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey