

Daily Devotional, May 1, 2020 Who Was That Masked Man?

Now that everyone is required to wear a suitable mask to protect each other from germs spread through the air, recognizing each other has become more difficult. It used to be that only law abiding citizens, with the exception of those in the medical field and those working in industries where protection from breathing unhealthy particles and gases, did not wear masks. Today it is the new normal, which for everyone's safety is perfectly reasonable. Those who defiantly go about without one because of a sense of invulnerability or rights of freedom do not apparently understand how much more at risk they place others, especially those of my generation and beyond. I pray that they will begin to reconsider how this affects their own loved ones.

But this devotion is not intended as a scolding of others. Instead it is meant to lift up those who are fearless workers and volunteers who have put themselves out there in service to others. This of course includes the medical personnel and first responders who put their own safety at risk every day that they are on the job, and for all of those who work in other essential services. I had to make my bi-monthly trek to the grocery store today and got to witness first-hand the work of those who help feed us, making sure that we are able to keep up our nutrition levels.

There are those who are still working in the restaurant industry who continue to provide takeout meals for those that may not be able to fix their own meals or are still working and must eat on the go. I thank them for their service, and I also want to thank all of you who continue to support their local merchants who are barely staying afloat and who are still keeping staffs employed, although I am certain that it is becoming more difficult the longer this crisis drags on.

And then there are those who staff the many food banks and shelters that have existed and those that have been established all over our metropolitan area and other places throughout our nation. They are providing emergency food assistance to those who cannot afford food right now. Many have been laid off from their jobs, others are underemployed, on public assistance or on disability. Others have no means to get to food retailers or food pantries.

This is where I want to acknowledge those who have been delivering food and other necessities to those who have no way to afford or get to those resources. There are folks doing this all over, but I want to properly acknowledge those who are taking the time and effort to put on their mask, to pick up an order, and to deliver groceries and other essentials to those who are in great need and despair.

We have a handful of such grace-filled volunteers here at Hope, who I am sure want no acknowledgement, but who are to be thanked for their compassion and care. They have put on their masks and have picked up groceries from the doorstep of a food pantry, and delivered them to a stranger's doorstep, sometimes as much as 20 miles away. Now, I'm showing my age, but this reminds me of the old T.V. series the Lone Ranger. I'm sure that those on the receiving end would say: "Who was that masked man? I don't know, but I wanted to thank him! As they ride off into the sunset..."

Paul tells us in Romans 13: 9b **"Love your neighbor as yourself."** 10 **Love does no harm to a neighbor. Therefore, love is the fulfillment of the law.** 11 **And do this, understanding the present time: The hour has already come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.** 12 **The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.** 13 **Let us behave decently.....as in the daytime, not in dissension and jealousy.** 14 **Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the flesh.**

In my mind, every one of these above individuals have shown love to their neighbor, have put on their masks, their armor of light, and have clothed themselves with the Lord Jesus Christ. May God bless you in your diligence and encourage you to continue to clothe yourselves in the love of our Lord. And may all of us look for these same opportunities to wear our masks, our armor of light to our neighbors around us who are in similar need.

Prayer: Lord, help and guide us in fulfilling your law of love for one another. May our light shine in the darkness as we clothe ourselves in your love and put the needs of our neighbors ahead of our own. In the light and love of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.