

their various afflictions. All appeared to have speech impairments. All were lacking basic motor skills for walking or climbing stairs or using cutlery. They had to be given assistance getting off the bus. Eleven were in wheelchairs. The organization in charge had supplied some caregivers, but obviously not enough to meet the special and many needs of those now on the patio waiting for someone to help them to their respective rooms.

While I watched, I became aware of someone standing near me, waiting to be recognized. It was Tammy. Having been the speaker at both youth and teen camps for many years, at which Tammy had frequently been present, I knew her well. I was surprised to see her. What was once a young Junior High camper, was now an elegant lady, having majored in music, and was presently a candidate for the school of medicine.

"What in the world are you doing here, Tammy?" Her smile was the type that made one feel that regardless of circumstances, she had a joy that was permanent and available to all who needed their spirits lifted.

"I came to volunteer for a week. I heard they were short-staffed for the Special Needs campers. I had the week off, so here I am. I also heard you were here this week, speaking to the teens. We'll probably run into each other."

I interrogated Tammy. "Have you ever worked with Special Needs patients before? Have you any idea the amount of assistance they need?"

Some of them are totally unable to help themselves. They have to be dressed, washed, teeth-brushed, spoon-fed, some of them have to have their chairs pushed and some who are not in chairs, have to be led by the hand. Are you prepared to be on duty twenty-four hours a day for an entire week?"

Tammy smiled one of her disarming smiles, and replied nonchalantly, "It will be a long week, but I'll survive. I'll give them the occasional spoonful of tender loving care, and we'll get along just fine. We'll have a great time. You pray for me, and I'll pray for you. Is that a deal?"

I secretly wondered whether Tammy would survive the week. I knew her to be a girl with a tenacious and determined spirit. She was already an accomplished musician with a goal of continuing on in medicine. Had she weighed the demands of looking after Special Needs patients for an entire week? The tasks would not all be pleasurable, indeed most would be grievous. Those emotionally distraught could be most cantankerous, bad-tempered and thorny. How surprised I was to see Tammy, a few moments later, tripping across the campus with a Special Needs camper on either hand, and singing at the top of her voice. It had taken her less than an hour to win their confidence, trust and friendship. Whenever and wherever I saw Tammy, she was surrounded by her special friends. There was merriment and jollity. Their spirits were high with gaiety and fun-loving entertainment. They had fallen in love with Tammy, and Tammy with them.

It has been my habit to awaken in the night for a period of reading and quiet time. I opened my door to tiptoe to the foyer to make a cup of tea and read in one of the easy chairs. Surprise! There, in the middle of the hallway, was Tammy lying on a matt. I came closer. "Tammy, can't you sleep?"

"Oh sure, but I'm lying here in the hall listening. I'm on duty. My campers have needs in the night too. I get a few winks now and then, but I have to be vigilant. They need my assistance when nature calls." Faithfully and uncomplainingly, Tammy spent the

nights in the hall on the floor, always alert and prepared to give assistance to every need regardless of the hour.

On one occasion, I happened to enter the dining hall where the Special Needs were being served their meals. Tammy was at one of the tables, spoon-feeding a camper that looked to be about 55 years old. Tammy was doing her task rhythmically to the sound of music. "One more spoonful, and this one for," - and she would name one of the campers. There were hoots of laughter. Never had these Special Needs campers been so royally and beneficially entertained. Tammy had won their hearts. Her gift of song and her joyful disposition dispelled every tendency toward grumpiness or discontentedness. Every tendency toward uncooperativeness was dispelled with a gleeful rendition of a simple limerick of song which they were to hear dozens of times, and the more they heard it, the more they rejoiced to hear it again. It was the salve that cured every tense situation. If only the children of Israel could have had some Tammys along on their wilderness trek, so I thought.

The week was over and Saturday morning had arrived. The handvans and buses were parked with doors open, ready for loading. I watched as the hydraulic lifts loaded the wheelchair patients. I approached to assist those who might need my support. To my consternation, every camper was weeping uncontrollably, as they waved goodbye to Tammy. The intensity of the crying was not abated by shouts of admonishments from the caregivers. I observed the caregivers. They didn't seem to be concerned. I looked at Tammy. Tears were rolling down her cheeks. There was no stopping the weeping and heart-breaking sobbing. One by one they were loaded into the vehicles, and as the last door closed behind the last camper, their sobbing climaxed and

broke into a frightening crescendo.

Tammy was still standing where the last camper had been helped into the bus. It had just disappeared around the bend. I ventured to her side, "I have to compliment you Tammy. I thought you wouldn't make the week. You persevered to the very end."

I waited for a reply. After wiping a few more tears, she responded, "I learned something this week which I will never forget as long as I live. The lessons those Special Needs have taught me far surpass any lessons I have ever been taught in my academic career. My life has been immeasurably enriched."

"Tammy, you have to explain that statement. What benefits could you possibly have derived from working with Special Needs?"

Tammy fought for words. Wiping away more tears, she spoke passionately and with fervent conviction. "The Special Needs have a God-given attribute which will be my prayer, starting this very hour, that God will graciously give that gift to me also. They have an extraordinary sensitivity to feel one another's needs. When one weeps, they all weep. When one rejoices, they all rejoice. When I felt tired and weak, they were by my side, holding my hand and throwing their arms around me. They just knew when I was weary and needed encouragement. Also, the acute sensitivity of the needs of others had preference over their own. Their unselfishness was astoundingly obvious and humbling. They all carried a bag of problems, insecurity and fear of loneliness being most apparent, but their concern was for others. They communicated their concern for others with consoling hugs and smiles. They loved most when someone's need was most





Tammy fought for words. Wiping away more tears, she spoke passionately and with fervent conviction. "The Special Needs have a God-given attribute which will be my prayer, starting this very hour, that God will graciously give that gift to me also. They have an extraordinary sensitivity to feel one another's needs. When one weeps, they all weep. When one rejoices, they all rejoice."



evident. They empathetically felt each other's deepest feelings and expressed their support without the need to articulate them in words. They sorrowed when they perceived someone sorrowing and their tears were not crocodile tears. Their tenderness toward one another was sincere and candidly honest."

Tammy paused and looked down. She was troubled. In a reflective mood, she spoke in a distressed tone. "A conversation I had with one of the caregivers disturbs me greatly. I was given the impression that the altruistic organisations have classified these people as the very least. I have classified them as very precious, and a cherished possession in God's sight. Whenever I observed them, I was reminded of Jesus and His tenderness toward the down trodden and despairing, which society in that day exorcized from their communities. I literally saw Jesus in those Special Need's faces. I'm sure Jesus must have been referring to them also when He said, "What you do to the least of these, ye do it unto me." All week,

I felt as though I was serving, not the least, but serving Jesus. Every task I did, I did it for Him. What a blessing and privilege it's been. He provided the strength, the grace, the patience and His immeasurable love for every task. It's been such a rewarding week."

"And when the Son of Man, the King, will come in all His glory and majesty, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left."

"Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you

invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to me."

"Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, "Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger and invite You in, or naked and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to you?"

"And the King will answer and say to them, "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even to the least of them, you did it to Me."

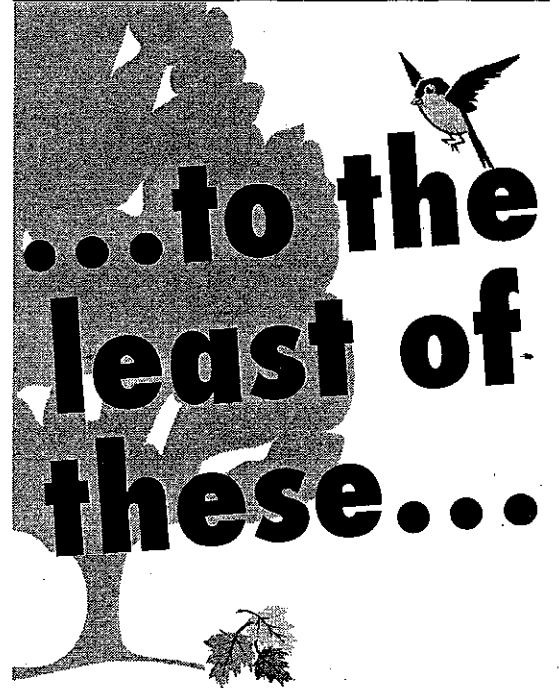
Matthew 25: 31 - 40

Dear Reader

We have now completed a new Education Centre for both children and adults. Many of them have special needs, and they all need the love of Jesus Christ. Perhaps you would delight in the opportunity to sponsor a student and see the life changing power of the love of Christ.

Thank you sincerely, and God bless you for your dedicated support.

**Union Gospel Mission
Box 1073 Stn. Main
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 2X4**



The handyvans were rolling into camp. The camp would be accommodating Special Needs campers. Special Needs were those who were lacking a full compliment of healthy attributes, which we so carelessly, unappreciably and without gratitude, take for granted. They were those lacking health emotionally, mentally and to some degree, all were physically handicapped. It was obvious that they had been born with