

Speaker 1:

Genesis 1:27. "So God created human being in his image. In the image of God, he created them. He created them male and female." The Canada and Bermuda territory has identified four values that guide our ministry, hope, service, stewardship, and dignity. Today, I want to focus on dignity. Dignity is the respect and value we have for each other recognizing everyone's worth as an equal part of God's amazing creation.

Indeed, humanity was created in the image of God. God's intention was that his creation would live in harmony with him and one another. Sadly, we read in Genesis 3, how our first parents lost their way. They were motivated by selfish interests and disobedience. That sin broke their relationship with God and one another. It didn't take long for humanity to descend into a life by injustice, suffering, and violence.

Every day we can see the mess that humanity has made of the world leaving countless multitudes on the fringes of hope. On this day, however, we celebrate that God had a plan to address the brokenness of humanity. He sent his son Jesus Christ in human form to show us a better way of living loving and serving. Jesus came to restore dignity to the outcasts. He brought value and worth to those considered unlovable and undesirable.

In fact, in Jesus' time, you will remember that personal brokenness, spiritual, mental, or physical were seen as simply as personal misfortune, but rather as punishment from God. Less than individuals, the blind, lame, sick, demon possessed and lepers were callously abandoned to the outskirts of society. And yet, rather than avoiding the undignified in culture, Jesus sought them out.

He healed the sick, touched the leper and made the blind to see. In doing so, Jesus was not just taking care of their physical disabilities, but he was also reintegrating the disenfranchised back into society and their neighborhoods. Jesus brought a new meaning to the lost and hurting, restoring and worth even to the most hopeless. In John 9:3-7 provides one such example.

Jesus answered, "It is not this man's sin or his parent's sin that made him blind. This man was born blind so that God's power could be shown in him. While it is daytime, we must continue doing the work of the one who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of day the world." After Jesus said this, he spit on the ground and made some mud with it and put the mud on the man's eyes.

Then he told the man, "Go and wash in the pool of Siloam. So the man went, washed and came back seeing." Jesus invested time and effort in this man's life. He met his physical need and then completely changed the direction of the man's life. Rather than begging for bread and living as an outcast, the man was now positioned to move forward as a contributor to his home and his community. That's what dignity does for a person.

As Christian, our response to the cry of humanity must include meeting the most basic needs of the poor and marginalized. Sometimes that is accomplished by providing a hot meal for the homeless in one of our downtown shelters. But just as importantly, it can be done by you and me reaching out to the lonely, to a senior feeling isolated, to a child living on your street who is abused or bullied. Or perhaps a co-worker feeling lost and devalued.

Our interest love and warm embrace for our neighbor and fellow worker can build esteem, strengthen the spirit and bring dignity. William Booth voiced his personal concern for the less than insane. While women weep as they do now, all fight. While children go hungry, as they do now, all fight. While men go into prison in and out and in and out as they do now, all fight. While there is a poor loss girl upon the streets, while there remains one dark soul without the light of God, all fight, all fight til the very end.

Friends, let's take this charge from William Booth and the example of Jesus Christ in scripture and make sure we apply it to our actions and values that we hold sacred. Hope, service, stewardship, and probably most important dignity. By extending dignity to others, we become a loud voice for justice and an advocate along with Jesus for the less than, who are our equal brothers and sisters in Christ.

Please share a prayer with me. Father God help us to be your hands and feet today, as we extend grace and mercy to those hurting, lonely, hungry, and sick. Help us to be your light of hope for all to see during these times of darkness. Help us to show respect and value to everyone as we share your love in real and practical ways today.

Grant us your peace, grant us comfort and freedom from hardship. Grant us healing and reconciliation. We ask all these things in the one who loves us more than anyone, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. God bless you.