



Only One Returned

Devotion

I teach high school English. By the end of the year, there were about ten seniors in jeopardy of not graduating because they had been lax in their studies. In order to help them over that last hurdle, I created an extra credit assignment for them to complete to help guarantee they could walk the graduation line with their peers. This is not something that I usually offer. Why assign extra work to students when they are unable to finish the original assignments?

The final unit for senior English was to read George Orwell's *1984*. These at-risk young men and women were given the task of writing an alternative ending to the book for extra credit. They were given the rubric of expectations and were then scheduled to tell their endings to the class a day before their semester final. They all wrote marvelous and plausible endings for Winston Smith. The papers were well constructed and their efforts were worthy of a graduating senior. But even with those efforts, a couple of students needed their grade rounded up to pass the course. I did so with a clear conscience since they had demonstrated solid ability.

I tried to express to these young people that I did not have to do what I was doing for them. They could have been left to make up this class in summer school or online. Their graduation plans could have been put on hold. What they were getting from me was grace and mercy. I half-jokingly told them that they could each get me a nice teacher appreciation gift.

Only one student said thank you. This grateful individual left me a greeting card with a gift card for a local restaurant and a movie ticket. Whereas grade school teachers often get many teacher gifts from their students, high school teachers seldom do. I was very touched. The greeting card would have been more than nice enough.

This situation reminded me of the story of Jesus cleansing the ten lepers (Luke 17:11-19). He offered these ten men grace and mercy by healing them. Yet only one returned *and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan* (Luke 17:16). The least likely fellow, the foreigner, gave thanks to God. The young man who thanked me told me he didn't think he needed an education because he planned to work on a ranch, yet he did thank me more than anyone.

We all have been given grace and mercy from our heavenly Father. Have we returned to thank Him for His intervention in our well-being? We, too, can be like the Samaritan or the rancher student and show how grateful we are to those we know that love us and, most importantly, to Him, who loves us unconditionally. And how grateful we are to our Heavenly Father who through His death and resurrection wiped us clean from all our sins so that eternal life with Him might be ours.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank You for so many mercies which You bestow on us each day. Help us to show our gratitude for those whom You have placed in our path to help us on our way. In Your holy name. Amen.

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Published by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, 2016
lwml.org