

Victor

The old man was obviously homeless. His bicycle was very heavily loaded down with cans and other items he had collected for recycling. The chain on the bike was badly bent and he had stopped at my bicycle shop for repairs. It was only a few days before Christmas and it was obvious that he needed to have some repairs done in order to get to where he was sleeping. The language he spoke was unfamiliar and we worked through our communications with lots of hand gestures. His name was Victor and it was obvious that he was far from where he stayed and needed some repairs done to the bike to get home. Also, he didn't have any money and would have to pay me later. I went to work figuring that this would be a Christmas gift to him and I would have little chance to ever be paid. After I was done he started speaking and looked up towards heaven and said two words I could understand "Jesus Christo". He was thanking Jesus for my act of kindness.

I felt ashamed. I had been concerned about getting paid while one of God's children was in difficulty and needed my help.

It turned out that Victor was a Romanian man with many needs and over the next few years a number of us at the bike shop and even our kids pitched in to help him to get an apartment, furniture, food and meet other needs he had. He always paid me back for the repairs to his bike and I can still recall the day that he came into the bike shop all smiles with a huge catfish that he had caught as a thank you gift for me. I dared not refuse the gift that was probably his dinner and he had given it to me in loving gratitude.

Some time later we learned that Victor had been in a serious bicycle accident and gone to be with his Lord Jesus Christo. He had only been with us for a little while and then he was gone.

Although we never had a common language, we had a common Lord and Savior.

The lesson my time with Victor taught me was that when we are approached for help, the person in need may make us feel uncomfortable. They may speak a different language or be dressed in clothes that are different from our own but we must remember to treat them just like the Lord himself.

MT 25:34-40 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

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