

## The Blessing of Self Sacrifice

Pastor John Hicks

First United Methodist Church

One day while 7 year-old Mark was sitting at his desk in the classroom, he felt something warm and looked down to see the front of his pants wet, and a puddle at his feet on the floor. He could not believe it was happening to him. Immediately he realized all the ramifications that this meant. He could already hear the teasing of the other classmates. He immediately buried his head in his hands and prayed, "God I need help now!" He heard someone approaching him and looked up to see Susie coming in his direction with a big gold fish bowl in her hands. It was Susie's day to clean the fish bowl. "Oh no! Not Susie! She would see and he would never be able to speak to her again."

But then it happened! Just as she got to his desk Susie dumped the entire bowl of water, fish and all into Marks' lap.

The teacher jumped to Mark's rescue. Scurried him away to the boiler room, gave him a pair of Gym shorts to wear, hung his trousers on the boiler to dry, and put her arm around him lavishing him with sympathy and understanding. When they returned to the class room all the children were busy with paper towels drying up the floor, Mark's books and scolding little Susie for her clumsiness. When Susie tried to help, the teacher said, "Susie, I think you have done enough for one day."

The acceptance and sympathy felt so good to Mark that he failed to realize how rejected Susie felt by the condemnation of his classmates. This lasted the rest of the day, until they were all out front waiting for rides home.

It was then Mark saw the pain in Susie's eyes as she stood all alone, while students from other classes heard about the incident for the first time and crowded around Mark lavishing more understanding.

Mark went over to Susie, and whispered, "Susie, you saw, you knew didn't you? You dumped that water on me on purpose didn't you?" Susie replied, "Mark, I saw you lay your head on your desk. I wet my pants once too."

"Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) I have experienced this first hand. One of my most memorable experiences came in my younger informative years. I couldn't tell you how embarrassing it was when one of my friends' mothers called me a bull in a china shop when I accidentally broke a piece off of a model airplane that my friend and I were putting together. A short time later I accidentally dropped a large bowl of popcorn trying to catch a glass of water I had tipped over. I was embarrassed beyond belief. Then came the question I knew would bring me more embarrassment, "What happened in here? Who made this mess?"

Before I could answer, my friend spoke up, "You know me!" He was the Susie to my Mark. He took the shame so I would not have to. There were not words adequate enough to express my gratitude and relief.

Over the years, I have pledged that I would try my best to do the same for those around me when opportunity presented itself. I have learned that the best way to be of service is often very simple - it's those little, quiet, often unnoticed acts of kindness that we choose to do on a daily basis that really make a difference.

Something else I've learned: "Giving is its own reward." When we give, we also receive. In fact, what we receive is directly proportional to what we give. As we give more freely

of ourselves in our own unique ways, we will experience more blessings than we ever thought possible. Everyone wins, especially us.