

**Cristina Arce-Jones
Sunday Service**

**Irvine United Congregational Church
October 19, 2008**

**Living Messages: Make a Change By Letting Your Light Shine
WC: 1,249**

There are so many problems going on in today's society, everyone just trying to survive, to stay above water because our economy has gone downhill. People are fearful that the early 1930's are coming back, along with another depression. It's difficult to think of other things going on in the world, other people. This upcoming years election will make history because for the first time ever, an African-American man might be our president. This November, every single one of us (if you're at least 18, of course) has the chance to decide to take away somebody's right, of whom they marry. That's a big decision. They're all big decisions, and there are so many problems that need changes. I know a lot of you in this room care and know what's going on and want to make a change, have your vote matter, your opinion heard. But there can't be any changes made if you just sit back and watch other people do it for you. Now is the time. "No more broken promises, No more call to war, Unless it's love and peace that we're really fighting for, We can destroy hunger, We can conquer hate, Put down the arms and raise your voice, We're joining hands today."

It all starts with one person, one-person sacrificing time, or money. Let's say, you see an old woman stranded on the side of the road, in obvious need of help. But you're running late to a very important meeting and you think, someone will come along to help her. Anybody could do it, but you can't because you're running late. One person does stop, and his name is Bill. Bill was driving home one evening, on a two-lane country road. Work, in this small Midwestern community, was almost as slow as his beat-up Pontiac, but he never quit looking. Ever since the factory closed, he'd been unemployed, and with winter raging on, the chill had finally hit home. He could go down this road blind, and tell you what was on each side, and with his headlights not working, that came in handy. It was starting to get dark and light snow flurries were coming down. You know, he almost didn't see the old lady, stranded on the side of the road. But even in the dim light of day, he could see she needed help. So he pulled up in front of her Mercedes and got out. His Pontiac was still sputtering when he approached her.

Even with the smile on his face, she was worried. No one had stopped to help for the last hour or so. Was he going to hurt her? He didn't look safe, he looked poor and hungry. He could see that she was frightened, standing out there in the cold. He knew how she felt. It was that chill that only fear can put in you. He said, "I'm here to help you ma'am. Why don't you wait in the car where it's warm? By the way, my name is Bill." Well, all she had was a flat tire, but for an old lady, that was bad enough. Bill crawled under the car looking for a place to put the jack, skinning his knuckles a time or two. Soon he was able to change the tire, but he had to get dirty and his hands hurt. As he was tightening up the lug nuts, she rolled down her window and began to talk to him. She told him that she was from St. Louis and was only just passing through. She couldn't thank him enough for coming to her aid. Bill just smiled as he closed her trunk. She asked him how much she owed him. Any amount would have been all right with her. She had already imagined all the awful things that could have happened had he not stopped. Bill never thought twice about the money. This was not a job to him. This was helping someone in need, and God knows there were plenty who had given him a hand in the past. He had lived his whole life that way, and it never occurred to him to act any other way. He told her that if she really wanted to pay him back, the next time she someone who needed help, she could give that person the assistance that they needed, and Bill added "...and think of me". He waited until she started her car and drove off.

It had been a cold and depressing day, but he felt good as he headed for home, disappearing into the twilight. A few miles down the road the lady saw a small cafe. She went in to grab a bite to eat, and take the chill off before she made the last leg of her trip home. It was a

dingy looking restaurant. Outside were two old gas pumps. The whole scene was unfamiliar to her. Her waitress came over and brought a clean towel to wipe her wet hair. She had a sweet smile, one that even being on her feet for the whole day couldn't erase. The lady noticed that the waitress was nearly eight months pregnant, but she never let the strain and aches change her attitude. The old lady wondered how someone who had so little could be so giving to a stranger. Then she remembered Bill. After the lady finished her meal, and the waitress went to get her change from a hundred dollar bill, the lady slipped right out the door. She was gone by the time the waitress came back. She wondered where the lady could be, then she noticed something written on a napkin. There were tears in her eyes, when she read what the lady wrote. It said, "You don't owe me a thing, I've been there too. Someone once helped me out, the way I'm helping you. If you really want to pay me back, here's what you do... " Don't let the chain of love end with you." Well, there were tables to clear, sugar bowls to fill, and people to serve, but the waitress made it through another day.

That night when she got home from work and climbed into bed, she was thinking about the money and what the lady had written. How could she have known how much she and her husband needed it? With the baby due next month, it was going to be hard. She knew how worried her husband was, and as he lay sleeping next to her, she gave him a soft kiss and whispered in a soft, and low voice, "Everything's gonna be all right; I love you Bill." Bill had done something so little, something that didn't seem like a big deal to him. Yet for his good deeds, he was rewarded. "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. **15**Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **16**In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Bill did just that and so can you. Our problems may be greater than the old lady stranded by the road, but we can still make a difference. "We're the generation we can't afford to wait the future started yesterday and we're already late."

Sermon References

1. <http://www.motivateus.com/stories/light.htm>
2. <http://www.metrolyrics.com/if-youre-out-there-lyrics-john-legend.html>

Scripture

Matthew 5:14-16 **14**"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. **15**Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **16**In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Psalms 100:1-5 100:1 A Psalm of praise. Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all ye lands. 100:2 Serve the LORD with gladness: come before his presence with singing. 100:3 Know ye that the LORD he [is] God: [it is] he [that] hath made us, and not we ourselves; [we are] his people, and the sheep of his pasture. 100:4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, [and] into his courts with praise: be thankful to him, [and] bless his name. 100:5 For the LORD [is] good; his mercy [is] everlasting; and his truth [endureth] to all generations.

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