

Keeper of the Streets -- A Modern Day Parable

Inspired by John 10:11-18

Joshua stood on a balcony in the city center and said, "I am the Keeper of the Streets. A good caretaker gives up his free time for cleaning the streets." This was his usual Saturday morning routine -- to survey the city streets and see which areas needed care. Joshua does this because he loves and cares for his hometown on a different level than most. A bird's eye view reveals a new perspective of the many ways people see the world.

He notices a woman in a nearby neighborhood heading out for her morning run. The air is crisp and she is ready to start this new day on the right foot. Morning runs get her blood flowing and body pumping with energy. She takes this time to clear her head, say some prayers, and reflect on her life. What was good yesterday? What can she make better today?

She takes very good care of her own yard and street. She always watches for debris that has been tossed out by passers by near her home. Rarely will a visitor see trash on her block! As she turns the corner, she notices a bit of trash by the curb. Since it is not in view of her front stoop, she considers this someone else's responsibility to clean up. Very easily she passes it by. Sometimes the wind blows and scatters the trash. But, it isn't her concern. She thinks, "Someone who works for pay to clean the streets will take care of that." The runner is blocks away from her home now and crosses into another neighborhood. She checks her timing and distance on her watch.

Joshua takes a deep breath. The fresh air in his lungs, warm sun on his face, and sweet song of the birds refocuses him. He said again, "I am the Good Keeper. I believe we are all responsible for the earth. All the streets are mine and yours. They are for you and me. Just as your own home is yours. Her home is hers. My home is mine. I will give up some of my free time for cleaning the streets.



Later, as Joshua is walking through a small neighborhood park, he sees a young family picking up debris and tidying the park. They care for their neighborhood and do this without complaint. No one has to ask them to do it. They don't wait for

someone else to do it. They just do it because they care about their neighbors and their neighborhood.

Five miles down the road is a larger recreational nature park where people of all ages gather to enjoy the outdoors. Joshua sees a team of youth from a church in another city who are pruning and cleaning and caring for this area that doesn't even belong to them. They had been passing through recently and noticed that the shrubs and walking paths appeared to be somewhat neglected. So they made the plan to return and help out. They see the earth as one home, and all people as one team.

On his way back home, Joshua passed a gathering of Scouts listening intently to the voice of their leader. He was speaking about personal responsibility and respecting the land. The troop was preparing for a week-long camping trip to the mountains. The Scoutmaster was reminding his young, eager campers that the beautiful earth is our gift, and it is each one's personal responsibility to love and care for it. So when you drop a wrapper or when you finish a drink, you should



dispose of it properly. No one else should pick it up for you. But, he added, that isn't enough. Let's not stop there! When you see a wrapper or drink that someone else left on the ground, go ahead and do the right thing. Pick it up and dispose of it properly. Each of us has the power to cause more clutter, and each of us also has the power to clear away the clutter.

Joshua smiled. What a great command they have received. Such awareness I received from my Father. This is why my Father loves life. He is a kind and gentle soul who isn't one to live in his own little space, ignoring the rest of the world. He cares about more than his own needs, wants, and desires. He believes and teaches that we all need to care for one another and for the world.

As Joshua made his way back to his apartment, he reflected on all of this. It's bigger than the circle of myself; bigger than the circle of my family; bigger than the circle of my friends; bigger than the circle of my block; bigger than the circle of this city; bigger than the circle of this nation; bigger than any circle I can imagine. His heart swelled with love.



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