

What Should I do?

Inspired by Luke 3:10-18

Christmas is only two weeks away. Carole feels overwhelmed. She tried to make Advent a Holy Season of calm and prayer and waiting in joyful hope. But, she stays just as busy as ever — even more so with regular work and family commitments, plus the added holiday stress and relatives coming to visit. It takes a lot of work to celebrate the birth of our Savior. There's food to prepare, gifts to purchase and wrap, decorations to be displayed, and the numerous other ordinary things on her daily to-do list. There just doesn't seem to be enough time!

It's Monday morning. As Carole is getting ready for work, she listens to the news. The stories are all so bleak! And this time of year, those heart-wrenching commercials are relentless. Carole finds herself spinning down a spiral of sadness. The stories and pictures make her feel like a selfish, uncaring person. "What can I do?" she pleads to the TV. "I want to hug every child who has cancer. I want to feed every person who is hungry in the world. I want to provide unlimited clean water to everyone. I want to rescue every stray animal who has been abused and neglected."

She slips down at the breakfast table uninterested in her morning oatmeal. "What can I do?" she asks aloud, then rests her weary head in her hands for several minutes. Carole manages to make it to work on time and make it through the hectic work day. But, all day that big question weighted heavily on her heart. "What can I do? What *should* I do?" Later that evening, as she walked through the Mall shopping, she still couldn't put it to rest. Her gift list for all her beloved family has been riding in her purse for months. But, as she rummaged through the disheveled stacks of clothing and looked over displays of novelty gifts, Carole was very aware of the true meaning of this Season that seems to have been pushed aside in order to make obligatory purchases to represent tokens of our love.

She thought to herself, my family has more than enough clothing and gadgets cluttering their homes. They are not in need of anything, yet here I stand struggling to buy something to wrap and put under the tree simply because that is what we do! Carole glanced up and notices the check-out line is growing and snaking through the aisles nearly reaching the back of the store. Every shopper is wearing nice shoes and warm clothes. She admitted, "my closet is stuffed with items I never wear, yet here I stand, arms filled with more.

"What should I do?" she asks again as she takes her place in line. Then, it comes to her like a brilliant light, as if John the Baptist himself spoke the reply, "For every pair of shoes I buy, I will give one pair away to someone who has none. And when we cook our Christmas Feast, we will invite someone who has no one to celebrate with." As she patiently makes her way slowly and surely forward in line, those morning commercials revisit with images of those sick and suffering children, the hungry, the hurting, and all the sad and lonely people and animals. She asked again, "God, what about them? What should we do?"

Carole checked out and headed home with her trunk filled with purchases and her heart filled with wonder. Suddenly, a gentle answer came. “Stop collecting for your rainy day. You have more than enough. Be satisfied with what you have set aside for the future. *Today is someone else’s rainy day* and they need your help now.” Carole decided she would begin to give regularly to one of those charities on TV and to a local shelter. She would have the donations taken straight out of her paycheck each month. She made it home safely, unpacked her car, and made a cup of tea to warm her hands and her insides. The bitter cold outside had chilled her to the bone. She felt thankful for her warm, dry home. She felt thankful for the warm, soothing tea.

Now her heart was filled with expectation. Somehow, she knew there was still more she should do. Something more was coming, and it was like a mighty force building inside her. Was she worthy of doing something more? She loosened the buckles and straps on her snow boots. She sat by the fire with her tea in hand and prayed to the Holy Spirit. “What more should I do?” Carole felt called to bring change in other ways, but the details weren’t clear to her.

She opened her Bible to read the Good News. God’s Word *always* has the answer. She turned to Saint Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, the Second Reading from Sunday’s Mass — perfect for this time of year. Carole read aloud and heard herself proclaim, “Rejoice in the Lord always.” Then, feeling a tiny bit awkward but quite convicted, she read the next verse louder. “I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Have no anxiety at all.” There is the next piece, she realized, and she stopped reading. Her heart was on fire and her mind understood. Let everyone feel peace and love in my presence. That is what I should do!

###

