

Saying Hello: Our Relationship with The Unseen

Then Peter said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. (Acts 3:6-10)

Visiting my sister in New York City, my two year old daughter, Eden, and I rode the subway everywhere. From Central Park to the Zoo to her New York University Campus, we rode the subway to all of our destinations. During our rides we met all kinds of people.

One interesting phenomenon that occurs on the subway in New York City is the way that people come on the trains asking for money. "May I have your attention?" They ask. No one gives it. Whether or not people are listening, the person begins to tell their story. Some have lost their jobs because of the recession while others are trying to sell DVDs they have made or songs they have written. Some are homeless, the years of the streets well worn on their faces.

Truthfully, I ignored them, no matter what their story was. I think it was mostly because I had no change to spare. But even if I did, I was busy balancing a baby, a stroller and a diaper bag, and trying not to get knocked over or get lost in a city where I clearly did not belong. How could they ask me for anything? Couldn't they see that my hands were full? I had nothing to give. I ignored them, but my daughter, Eden, could not.

One woman in particular caught her attention. She wore the dirt of the city on her face. Her hair was wild and her clothes were torn. "Hi!" Eden called to her. The woman was in the middle of her plea as Eden kept calling, "Hi. Hi there!" Then Eden started blowing kisses at her. My daughter was BLOWING KISSES at a homeless woman on the New York City subway. The homeless woman finished her story, and then made her way up and down the train with her bag asking for money.

As the woman stopped in front of me, cynicism filled my head. "Oh great," I thought to myself, "Here it comes." I waited for her to ask me for money.

"Miss," she began, "Your daughter's hellos mean more to me than any of the money I have collected today. No one ever says hello to me." Her words nearly knocked me over. I was one of those "no ones." I did not say hello.

The subway train doors opened and closed. She was gone and so were we. As I sat there holding my baby, balancing Eden's stroller, clutching the diaper bag, tears came to my eyes.

I remembered Peter and the man at the gate called Beautiful. He did not have gold or silver, but Peter knew what it meant to be in relationship with all of God's people. Not too busy, not too cynical, Peter wasn't even put off by the fact that the man at the gate called Beautiful was a "crippled beggar" as our scripture calls him. Peter was willing to share what he did have. He was willing to share grace, healing and the hope of Jesus Christ that brings new life.

The beggar at the gate called Beautiful was one of God's children and so was the woman on the Subway train. My daughter knew it, but I did not. I could not see.

May our eyes be opened to the "crippled beggars" that God places in our midst and may we share grace, healing, and the hope of Jesus Christ that brings new life.

Question: Who are the people you don't "see?"