

Day 26

A Warrior's Heart for 'Grace'

"Clean My Sheets!"

Our sweet little 5th Street had many Aunt Bee's. There is one distinctive name that has found its way onto these pages... 'Grace'. Although her example on these pages is to show grace, that was her real name. Grace lived across the street from us and one house up. Grace had very thick glasses that sometimes made her eyes look scary if she got too close. Grace was very particular about her house. She didn't like dirt. She was also extremely hard of hearing. As a young student the teachers actually used to strike her alongside the head when she couldn't hear them. I don't think Grace...was shown much grace growing up.

This is where the 5th Street neighborhood begins to resemble Mayberry. My level headed, handsome young Dad could have been Sheriff Andy Taylor. Grace could have played the role of Aunt Bee with a just a little bit of 'don't you mess with me'. Growing up on 5th Street did have its perks...and Grace was one of them.

She got married once, but her husband refused to quit wearing his dirty shoes in the back door...so she had the marriage annulled. It took me years to figure out what annulled meant. She never married again. I guess her clean rug was really important. I told you she didn't like dirt. Ever.

Then there was the afternoon when nobody in the neighborhood could find Grace. Sheriff Andy assembled the 5th Street neighbors. After discussion several neighbors had seen Grace leave with two women. A few hours later it was discovered that the two women had shown up at her door and promised her the deal of a lifetime if she would invest some money. Grace quickly became 'greedy Grace' as she agreed. They drove her to the bank where she withdrew what was considered a large sum of money at the time, than returned her safely home. She had fallen for a scam. All of 'Mayberry' felt bad for her. Although Mr. Malloy (aka Mr. Magoo) was slightly irritated that due to her greed she had fallen for a scam. I remember my parents saying that she was lucky something worse didn't happen to her...Grace's unfortunate decision to get into a car with strangers cost me an entire hour of TV that night. Sheriff Andy Taylor and his wife (my parents) felt it was necessary that they again review not talking to strangers. I remember thinking perhaps they should have had that talk with 'Grace'.

When my mom's health permitted she became the Warrior cook and caretaker of our little Mayberry. She would often have us take leftovers to our sweet neighborhood of ladies...including Grace. After dinner my mom would package up perfect portioned dinners for one complete with dessert. Grace would sometimes grumble about the meal. She wasn't happy with the temperature. It had too much or too little salt. The biscuit wasn't flaky. The gravy was lumpy. The Jell-O was runny. My mom used to say to be nice anyway...'Grace' hadn't been shown much grace. We were to show her that now. I actually liked visiting with Grace. Deep down I think she liked people; she just hadn't learned how to interact well. I am sure that being hit alongside the head with a ruler at school was just the start of the ridicule she must have endured.

One day Grace called our home on the telephone...not to be confused with a cell phone because there were no cell phones in 1969. The old 'Northwestern Bell' phone hung on the wall and rang very loudly until somebody answered it, or the caller hung up. No voicemail either.

We had taken Grace chili and crackers the night before...it didn't sit well with her...and had given her some bowel issues...causing her to 'make a mess' on her sheets because she couldn't make it to the restroom. Grace in her loud phone voice was letting my mom know...it was her fault...after all she had made the chili. Grace wanted her to come over immediately. She expected my mom to clean her bed and wash her sheets...and then make her bed.

That was a day I saw Grace...get real 'grace'. I heard my mom say in a very nice voice that she would be right over to help her.

My mom showed kindness to her by seeing Grace not only had food, but someone who cared for her. My Warrior grace mom showed me by example that grace (the real grace the Bible talks about) doesn't expect anything in return. It's freely given. Nothing is held back. You extend the hands and feet of Jesus to those who may extend nothing to you...that's grace...that's Jesus grace. It makes the Father proud of His Warrior daughters. God smiled at the phone call that afternoon. His young Warrior was learning the lesson of grace well.

My mom seemed to be able to extend grace without flinching because she practiced it so often. It created a true heart of a Warrior within her. She showed grace to many, often times even when she herself was not feeling well, or had to go without.

...Years later my great grandmother, also a resident on 5th street halfway up the block from Grace passed away. After a while my sweet little great grandfather, Milton McKeever, decided to court 'Grace'...that lasted about 10 days. I guess he thought it had been 50 years since her annulment perhaps the rug issue was no longer important. He never really got to find out. He made the mistake of giving her a box of chocolates...while eating one she broke a tooth...that brought that relationship to an end, but he wasn't asked to change any sheets.

Instruction Manual

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—Ephesians 2:8

