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Normally We Do ... But Not Today

By James L. Snyder

For a Christmas present, our children pulled their resources and gave the Gracious Mistress of the Parsonage and Yours Truly a marvelous little vacation in the eastern hills of Tennessee.

Upon arrival, we were delightfully surprised with all of our children and grandchildren being there as well.

The prospects of the week were simply delightful. I believe with all the children and grandchildren, along with two sons-in-law and one daughter-in-law, there were 13 people in this mountain log cabin.

Although there were many wonderful activities to employ our time, the feminine side of this vacationing clan selected shopping is the premier activity. It was not that the male side of our kinfolk were outvoted, we simply had no vote in the matter. So, a day of shopping was before us.

If you have ever been to a resort area, you will know certain places called "outlets" dominate the local landscape. Similar to shopping malls in normal communities, "outlets" possess one distinction separating them from the rest of the normal world.

Contrary to its name there are absolutely no visible outlets once you get inside. You are not permitted to leave until you have spent all of your money, and then you must promise to return when you have more money. I must confess, I lied and will keep my future accumulation of wealth our little secret.

An "outlet" is simply the direction money flows from your wallet. All of it flows out and you better let it.

During our particular day at the outlet, I found some other strange incongruities.

As our family dispersed to go our own separate directions, I noticed a large store with a sign that said, "Old Navy."

"Aha," I said to myself, "this should be an interesting adventure for me. (When I start talking to myself, it is a sign I'm about to delve into some mischief.)"

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Although I have never personally served in the military, I do have a great respect for it and an interest in its artifacts. Imagine my great disappointment when I walked into this store and discovered that Old Navy is not a military surplus store.

How do people get away with this kind of "bait and switch?"

Shouldering my disappointment like the gentleman I am, I exited the store and resumed my pilgrimage. To be quite honest, I have never seen so many things in one place that I don't want.

After awhile, tired of going in and out of the shops, I decided I wanted a nice hot cup of coffee, and a place to sit down and drink it while watching shoppers busily going in and out like a beehive. After all, a hot cup of coffee is a small thing to ask for, unless you order a large.

I'm sure that somewhere secluded in the United States Constitution or the Bill of Rights is the right to have a cup of coffee whenever you want it. If not, I propose an amendment right away.

Usually I'm a rather nice congenial person, but without my coffee, I turn into a caffeine-deprived wretch. Believe me, it's not a pretty sight.

I went into the first place that offered refreshments. After ordering a cup of Joe to go I was pleasantly greeted with, "I'm sorry. We normally have coffee, but not today." I was so stunned by this bit of information that I could not think of any clever little quip in response.

I visited several other such establishments (if you could call them that and I refuse to reveal what I was calling them at the time) and was cheerfully greeted with similar intelligence. With intelligence like this who needs kindergarten?

For several hours I roamed this caffeine-free zone as though I had stumbled into the Twilight Zone. I began mumbling incoherently, my hair disheveled itself and my beard grew three inches in protest of this stressful situation.

When everything looked hopeless, I spied a sign which snapped me back to my senses. "The Farmhouse Kitchen." Everyone knows at the foundation of every farmhouse kitchen in the civilized world is a coffeepot.

Before entering this haven-on-earth, I smoothed my disheveled hair, straightened my tie and tried to keep my smile from taking over my entire face. I breathed deeply, opened the door and entered heaven.

As soon as I walked in, I noticed the coffeepot way in the back of the store. With the confidence of a man who knows the difference between Old Navy and the Army surplus store, I ordered a cup of coffee.

"Oh, I'm terribly sorry, sir. We normally do have coffee, the best in town, but today our coffeepot is

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broken and we will not be able to get it fixed until tomorrow."

Upon hearing this my smile deserted me and I, for one, don't blame it. I quickly followed its example and exited the store in worse condition.

The promise of coffee, even the best in town, is no substitute to a steaming, hot cup of java in hand, now!

I may not be able to count on a cup of coffee when I want it, but there is something I can always count on now. "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2 KJV.)

I like the word "now."

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One Day at A Time

By Joyce C. Lock

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If just for today, Lord, I'll keep my eyes and heart in tune to Your ever-loving presence. I'll walk with You and glean upon Your every word ... be ready to go, ready to stay, and bask in the fullness of Your day.

If just for today, Lord, I'll find joy in whatever comes my way, give You glory in each situation ... smell the roses, pat the dog, and enjoy the wonder of Your creation.

If just for today, Lord, I'll check my thoughts, motives, and ways. I'll see through Your eyes all You'd have me to see and be all You'd have me to be. I'll reach out to my fellow man, give others a helping hand, and let Christ live in me.

The life of a true servant can only be lived "One Day at A Time".

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In addition to being a published author and poet, Joyce C. Lock created the religion column, "Christianity Made Simple" for Peru Daily Tribune, continues to write inspirational articles for area newspapers, and shares further in online and e-mail ministries.



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