

Abe and Will

by John Stocker

When I first retired, I followed the advice of an acquaintance I met in the park as he was walking his dog. I was ill at ease with the prospect of putting an end to the only life style I had ever known for the last forty years. He had advised me to take the first six months and do only what I wanted to do. This period of adjustment settled me into the new prospect of being a “free man” so to speak. I discovered joys in life which had eluded me for all the years I was working, because I was tied up in my job and had been unable to perform these more pleasurable options.

One of these joys was spending time with my granddaughter. I started doing this when she reached one year of age and have had the pleasure of monitoring her growth and development as she matured. During this time period, there have been several different day care situations. She has now settled into a home day care situation which is run by a loving and caring lady who periodically has her husband as an assistant.

There is a phalanx of children in this day care situation all of whom are walking and talking. However, when Abe and Will came upon the scene, Barb was thrown the proverbial “left curve” on two fronts. In the first place, Abe and Will were infants who neither walked nor talked. In the second place, Abe and Will are both males whose demeanors (as well as plumbing) were different from the little girls who were in the day care. Barb expertly handled the variety of situations which were presented by these diminutive challenges.

Part of the “fun jobs” Nancy and I had was to pick Madeleine (our granddaughter) up from daycare and take her home. When Abe and Will came into the picture, I took it upon myself to greet them. Since they were both infants, I merely bent over their cribs, and, if they were awake caressed their little heads. They both kicked and moved in acknowledgement. Abe went “AAAH” to greet me. “Aaah to you too,” I said. Will just smiled and drooled.

Infancy lasts only a little while, so, when another six months had passed, Abe and Will were in the toddler stage, both walking and performing investigative procedures which, as little boys, were right in line, but which became a bit of a surprise to someone used to dealing with little girls of a more quiescent nature. “AAAH”, said Abe as he knocked an entire row of cardboard blocks off the shelves....Will smiled and drooled as he followed suit. In fifteen seconds, Abe and Will could go through an immaculately kept room and turn it into an earthquake zone. The little girls would take down what they wanted to play with and in some cases put it back.

When Nancy and I came in to pick up Maddie, Abe looked at me and went “AAAH”. “Aaah” to you too, I said caressing his head as he waddled by en route to even more havoc. Will just smiled and drooled as I caressed his head as he waddled by, chasing after Abe.

One day however, Abe did something which brought tears to my myopic eyes. It was a chilly day, and I had on my nearly omnipresent navy pea coat. When Nancy and I came in to pick up Maddie, I heard the familiar “AAAH” from the other side of Barb’s living room. I looked over to see Abe as he flexed like a body builder and then spread his little arms apart as far as they would go. “Aaah to you too,” I said and flexed back at him.

He ran as fast as he could with his arms out stretched out to me. I got down on one knee and he put his arms under my pea coat and gave me the biggest hug his then thirteen month old body could muster. After the hug, he went back to knocking stuff off of shelves and the like. The meaning of this greeting was clear; it was an expression of love, expressed the only way a thirteen month old knew how to do.

Abe's expression of love came not on his own volition, but because of the kind expressions of loving care which I had extended to him. The Word says "We love, because He first loved us".ⁱ This Love which emanated from the heart of God the Father ultimately culminated in the sacrificial death of Jesus on the Cross of Calvary, and the burial in a borrowed tomb, followed by the sealing resurrection. Without this sacrifice all of mankind would be lost in sin. It was the ultimate expression of Love, poured out for all sinners who would be willing to receive it in Faith. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners.ⁱⁱ We did nothing to earn this Grace of God since it is the Gift of God.ⁱⁱⁱ

Abe and Will, though sixty years my junior, have the power to melt my heart through their simple ways of just being toddlers. Abbott and Costello could not be funnier, and no piece of touching literature could pierce the depths of my soul any more effectively. Would that I could return the Love of God as effectively as Abe and Will returned my simplistic caress of their little pates as an expression of love from me.

i I John 4:19

ii Romans 5:8

iii Ephesians 2:8