

## ED

His name was Ed. I first met Ed in, about 1958, when I was about age 10. I had been going through the usual trials and tribulations which affix themselves tenaciously and unwanted to the unsuspecting life of a 10 year old, misanthropically inclined pre-pubescent young man. The world around me, Gladstone, Oregon, did not, exactly welcome with open arms, those like me, who were looking for themselves before those “buzz words” became in vogue fifteen or twenty years later. It was a pyrrhic victory, of sorts, when I found out years later that I, in fact, was a decade and a half ahead of my time in the development of my maladjustment.

In any event, back to Ed. He lived in the Southwest corner of the town of Gladstone, Oregon. Remember, this was about 1958. He had a creatively acquired and constructed piano case sized hovel which was surreptitiously sequestered in the heart of a several acre sized mass of Himalayan Blackberries, punctuated by old Jeep trails and footpaths. These footpaths were visible only by those, who like Ed, were looking for some answers and had sought solace in the entangled morass of the encroaching blackberries. None of these other seekers had found any answers, but had thus far found only questions. These footpaths and trails, on which the other hovels were located, meandered appropriately enough, around dead Cottonwood and other deciduous trees which had been choked out by the invasive Blackberries. Ed’s home was visible and accessible through the jungle of berry vines and dead downed trees.

Because of the location of his shack, and, due to the proximity of the surrounding dining establishments, he was able to eat almost anything he wished. He did, however, need to operate on the “hunter gatherer” type of sustenance gathering, as a sort of “midnight requisition”. He gathered what he wished from the garbage cans of the surrounding restaurants on a midnight raid as he kept a watchful eye out for the inquisitive and prying eyes of the local constabulary who did not think the “Eds” of this world were an asset to the town. The modern day terminology for Ed in politically correct phraseology would be “homeless”.

Ed welcomed visitors. He did enjoy it when my friend introduced me to Ed. Ed always had one question for us....He would ask if we had been going to Church. I thought it an odd question for someone who had been referred to as “Ed the bum”, until I saw sitting on an overturned fruit box which was being used as a night stand, an open Bible. Ed’s spirit was always cheerful and I never heard him complain. He, like the apostle Paul, had learned the secret of contentment in whatever state he found himself[1].

Such was the spirit of this man, that I secretly wished to join up with him, leaving behind me, my being a square peg in the round hole of the late 50’s grade school society.

Time proceeded inexorably forward. The 100 year flood washed away the “blackberry homeless camp”, and a 10 year old maladjusted misanthrope mutated into a teenager, with the same questions on life. I did not know then, that these questions on life had been asked more expressively in the books of Ecclesiastes, Psalms, and other places in the Bible. Throughout the Old Testament, people had fallen victim to the tragedy of searching for answers which came as a result of Sin. Saul, having been anointed as the first King of Israel[2], failed to fulfill his initial calling as King and this culminated in God’s regret at having made Saul King[3].

David, having been picked by God as Saul’s replacement[4], was ostensibly picked because of God’s looking at man’s heart, not his outward appearance[5]. Yet, David, a man after God’s heart, sinned grievously[6], and concomitantly suffered either directly or indirectly as a result of this sin.

My favorite book in the Bible (Ecclesiastes) seems to be written from the perspective of an old man’s introspective look at the world, and a search for the same questions which perplex man now. These questions largely seem to focus around man’s purpose for being here in the first place. Solomon arrives at the answer in this look at the meaning of life[7]. With Ed’s open Bible, and his asking if we had been going to Church, I am assuming that he had found this answer.

The fellow inhabitants of the homeless camp wherein Ed lived did not seem to have the answers. They were protective and guarded about their even being there. They were existing testimony to the condition of fallen man[8] as they lived for themselves alone. Had they been more receptive, they might have spoken heart to heart with Ed and his open Bible, as he asked if they had been going to Church.

Someday, I hope to see Ed again. I remember that God looks a man's heart not his outward appearance. While Ed may have been rejected by the society in which he found himself, those who judge The "Eds" of this world, will someday find themselves having judged them unfairly[9]. I pray that they then, will find a more beneficent judge than they had been, and that I may be more merciful too, as a result this poignant reflection on people I once knew.

---

[1] Philippians 4: 12-13

[2] 1 Samuel 9: 1- 10:26

[3] 1 Samuel 15: 35

[4] 1 Samuel 16: 1-13

[5] 1 Samuel 13: 14, 16: 7

[6] 2 Samuel 11: 1-27

7 Ecclesiastes 12: 13-14

[8] Romans 3:23, 6:23

[9] James 2: 1-13