



REFLECTIONS

April 30, 2017 Refreshed from February 21, 2010

fearfully and wonderfully made;

Psalms 139:14

Man Behind the Beard

Joe sat behind a desk telling his story. He once was a family man with a business of his own, he explained. It was only a small restaurant, but it provided for his family and he took pride in his work. Then a violent car crash brought an end to it all. Joe's life would never be the same.

We looked down at Joe as he continued to describe how the loss of his legs and pain medication took control of his life. Bitter from his misfortune, he lashed his anger at his family over and over until finally they could take no more. They left him.

With no means of support and no one to care for him, Joe took up residence in the darkened shadows of an urban street bridge hoping no one would find him. Intense anger arose toward the world and those whose lives were better. His hate even extended to those living under the bridge with him. At least they could walk out into the sunshine.

As a recluse, he seldom bathed and he never shaved. He lived in the stench of unwashed clothes and behind a beard that masked his anger with life. But he was unable to escape the caring spirit of one young woman who had once lived under the bridge herself. Her compassion for the homeless led her to reach out them. When she discovered Joe hiding in the shadows, she couldn't help but wonder what might be hiding under the stench and behind the beard.

Time and again she tried to coax Joe from his cave-like home. Time and time again he refused. Then, one day, after two years of almost daily pleading, he finally agreed. If someone cared for him, maybe he should care too. Therapy helped enliven his spirit and restore his hope—hope for a meaningful life and hope maybe to walk again.

As Joe concluded his story, a little twinkle danced in his eye and a sly grin came over his face. He rose from his chair. There stood a man, surprisingly tall, powerfully built, and filled with pride. His eyes never left us as he walked about the room thankfully showing off his new legs. Even an unsteady gait did not diminish his confidence.

Risen now from the depths of despair, Joe has legs, a job, and a home. And because one compassionate soul committed to lend a helping hand to the homeless, he has hope. In her search, she found the semblance of a man lurking in the shadows, hiding behind his beard. Behind the beard, she uncovered a man injured by the trials of life. But she found something more. Hiding behind the beard, she found a child of God—

Fearfully and wonderfully made.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

www.reflectingthesavior.org.