



REFLECTIONS

November 17, 2019

**But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up,"
he said. "Don't be afraid."**

Matthew 17:7

Hugs of Kindness

She took her seat quietly next to us, uncertainty written on her face. On this her first visit to our church, she chose only to listen to the first hymn, then began to weep when she heard the pastor's prayer, seemingly just for her.

Her weep drew closer attention to this African American guest sitting beside us. We wondered about the cause for her grief then found the explanation on the attendance pad passing down our pew. Noting names and city of residence of those on our pew, Alfreda Johnson had written only her name. She had no place to call home.

Two weeks earlier, Alfreda braced for a looming storm in the Gulf. She had lived through hurricanes before, so even her greatest fear didn't imagine her family scattered, friends missing, or herself displaced with no place to call home. She wept and we grieved with her, yet grateful to be with her in her time of need if only to give her a hug.

We prayed for Jesus to be felt through our hugs; for her to see Jesus smiling through our smiles; for her to feel Jesus' hand grasping hers when we shook her hand; and for her to feel Jesus love upon her when others gathered around her to express their love. We prayed for her to remember this day as the day when Christ Jesus' words touched her, "*Get up. Don't be afraid.*"

Weeks passed after we hugged and comforted that lonely and lost New Orleans evacuee. She called once to express her thanks and let us know she was okay. But then we received a note from Alfreda. We were pleased to learn she had begun to settle into life in San Francisco with a new job and a place to live. She expressed appreciation again for the care given her and the love she felt during her stay at our church. And we found our prayers answered when she wrote, "*What a wonderful world this would be if everyone's life could be touched by someone as kind and caring as you.*"

We have heard no further from Alfreda since her beautiful note. But we carry the lessons from her faith and courage. Displaced from her home like Israel exiled to Babylon, *unafraid, she got up* and made the best of a new life right where God had led her. And just as God encouraged Israel while in exile: "*...seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.*" (Jeremiah 29:7) Oh! and one more lesson.

Simple hugs of kindness go a long way for those living through troubled times.

You are the light of the world,

Richard +

www.reflectingthesavior.org.