

Goodness Is Its Own Reward

By Swami Suryadevananda



There was a family of four that lived a simple life in a small town in the country – father, mother, young son called Johnny and his sister. Materially, they did not have much. Johnny’s mother took care of the home and family.

One of the most wonderful things about this family was their great love of being helpful to others. They had a unique rule in the home that every day each of them would do something good to or for others and this would be shared when they sat for supper. Talking about it was not for bragging but to share the joy of doing good with each other. After this, the family would say their evening prayers and have their supper.

One day Johnny was up and ready for school a little earlier. After breakfast, he asked his mother if he could walk to school earlier as it was quite close by and felt inspired to do something good. His mother packed his lunch and Johnny set out with his bag to see what opportunities he may come upon.

Let us look at three scenarios to understand the moral of the story.

Scenario One

Crossing the street from his home, Johnny sees a blind man waiting to cross the street. Seeing the opportunity to do a good deed, he runs up and asks the blind man:

“Good morning, sir, may I please be of help to you in crossing the street?”

“Thank you very much,” and puts his hand out.

Overjoyed, Johnny places the blind man’s hand on his shoulder and waits for the light to turn green. He then crosses the road with the blind man, and after thanking him for the opportunity to be of help, wishes him a good day.

Thoughts: Johnny set out to do good and was thrilled at the opportunity that was sure to come almost as he stepped right out of the door. He was most happy that it was still early and hoped to find another opportunity before school.

Scenario Two

Crossing the street from his home, Johnny sees a blind man waiting to cross the street. Seeing the opportunity to do a good deed, he runs up and asks the blind man:

“Good morning, sir, may I please of help to you in crossing the street?”

“Thank you very much,” and puts his hand out.

Overjoyed, Johnny places the blind man's hand on his shoulder and waits for the light to turn green. He then crosses the road with the blind man, and after thanking him for the opportunity to be of help, wishes him a good day.

Johnny turned around slightly, but saw the blind man walking away instead.

Thoughts: In an instant, an ever slight feeling of being unappreciated arose in him even though he did a good deed. This preyed on his mind throughout his walk to school, and as a result he was not able to feel either his cheerful self or to find other opportunities to do good.

Scenario Three

Crossing the street from his home, Johnny sees a blind man waiting to cross the street. Seeing the opportunity to do a good deed, he runs up and asks the blind man:

"Good morning, sir, may I please of help to you in crossing the street?"

"Thank you very much," and puts his hand out.

Overjoyed, Johnny places the blind man's hand on his shoulder and waits for the light to turn green. He then crosses the road with the blind man and after thanking him for the opportunity to be of help, wishes him a good day.

As Johnny was walking away, he felt a hand on his shoulder; it was the blind man. Johnny was overjoyed that perhaps there would be opportunity for some other way to help as he still had a little time before leaving for school.

Blind Man: "Son, I forgot to thank you, how careless of me. Thank you very much, may God bless you! May I give you a little chocolate?"

Johnny and the blind man felt wonderful moments of friendship, and relishing the thought of the delicious candy bar, he peeled back the wrapping and shared a piece with the blind man.

Thoughts: Johnny already felt that the very act of doing good was reward itself and the kind words of the blind man brought him extra joy. Not only this, but here was a wonderful bar of chocolate and there was still time to do some more good before school.

Moral of the Story: Goodness is its own reward—the very act of doing good is the best reward in itself. When one does not expect anything, the intention one sets out with finds fulfillment in the deed. When there are expectations, the good intent and deed fade into the shadows and one may experience disappointment instead. If, by some chance, external reward does come about, it only adds to the gladness already experienced by the intent and good deed.