

Speaker 1 (00:00):

Merry Christmas Sweet Selah friends. Sit for a moment and reflect with us as we study God's Word and the very first Christmas. We are so glad you're here. This Sweet Selah Moments Podcast is brought to you by Sweet Selah Ministries and Word Radio.

Nicole (00:18):

Welcome to the Sweet Selah Moments Podcast. This is episode 94, A Tender hearted Christmas. Last week, Sharon and I looked at ways to keep Christmas special and yet simple. One of the blessings that comes from keeping it simple is that we have the room and space to keep a tender heart for others. Christmas is not a happy day for many people. There are a lot of emotions that are triggered at Christmas time.

Sharon (00:41):

Oh, there sure are. The first Christmas without a loved one, for example, is a tough one. I remember the year Dad Gamble died and it was December 2nd, so it was really close to Christmas time. We were still dealing with death certificates and the empty room, his empty room at our house, and the ache was great. I loved him so much. Then our daughter was told that the foster child they were sure they could adopt, was being taken away from them. So we ended up flying to Iowa to help her with her own broken heart while we were still dealing with ours. It actually was healing. You know, we kind of were there for each other, but it wasn't the happiest Christmas.

Nicole (01:19):

No, I don't imagine it was. There are also people who aren't able to be with loved ones and the hurt that someone isn't coming home for Christmas can make it really hard to be in the holiday mood.

Sharon (01:30):

It can. Yeah.

Nicole (01:31):

Family is such a big deal at the holiday, Sharon, and families are complicated

Sharon (01:34):

Oh yes, they are.

Nicole (01:37):

So Christmases can be tough, you know? For us personally, last year was really tough for us. We all got Covid right through Christmas and missed all the family parties.

Sharon (01:45):

Oh, my goodness.

Nicole (01:45):

And Christmas Eve service at church, which is my absolute favorite. It was hard to keep all our spirits up.

Sharon (01:51):

Yeah. Yeah. You can have a Covid Christmas. (Nicole: Yes) You'll never forget it. Let's hope you don't ever have another one. Yeah, well that's why we're gonna look at how to keep a tender heart toward others this Christmas. We're gonna look at three passages of Luke 2, continuing, and then talk about how the first Christmas family stayed tender and how we can too. So, back to Luke 2. Last week we read about the journey to Bethlehem, the uncomfortable birth in a stable of some sorts, where baby Jesus was laid in a manger where normally cattle or donkeys or sheep ate their food. Nothing fancy or perfect about that setting. The first Christmas was not ideal. I'm gonna pick up the story now at Luke 2:7, and we'll read back and forth. "She (Mary) gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger because there was no lodging available for them."

Nicole (02:43):

"That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep."

Sharon (02:50):

"Suddenly" (Sorry).

Nicole (02:50):

Nicole: It's okay.

Sharon (02:52):

(I just told you we were reading back and forth, and I'm not.) "Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared among them and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified."

Nicole (03:02):

"But the angel reassured them, Don't be afraid, he said. I'll bring you the good news that will bring great joy to all people."

Sharon (03:08):

"The Savior, yes, The Messiah, The Lord has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David."

Nicole (03:15):

"And you will recognize him by this sign. You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth lying in a manger."

Sharon (03:22):

"Suddenly the angel was joined by a vast host of others, the armies of heaven, praising God and saying,"

Nicole (03:30):

"Glory to God in the highest heaven and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased."

Sharon (03:36):

"When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, let's go to Bethlehem. Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Nicole (03:44):

"They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph, and there was the baby lying in the manger."

Sharon (03:50):

"After seeing him the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child."

Nicole (03:56):

"All who heard the shepherds' story were astonished."

Sharon (03:59):

"But Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often."

Nicole (04:03):

"The shepherds went back to their flocks, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard. It was just as the angel had told them."

Sharon (04:11):

I love so much that God chose rough, lower class men to announce the birth of his son to the town of Bethlehem, the whole town, evidently. (Nicole: Yeah) They told everyone.

Nicole (04:20):

They were very excited.

Sharon (04:21):

Nicole, these guys were not even trusted to be a witness in a court of law their reputation was so poor in those days. (Nicole: Wow) And yet they dropped everything to go find that baby. You know, I think that busier more, um, important people, even if angels came to them, would go check it out later when they had more time. Right?

Nicole (04:39):

Hmm. That's a good point.

Sharon (04:40):

But those shepherds, they're like, we're on our way to Bethlehem time now. Right.

Nicole (04:45):

That's true. They weren't so busy with their important things that they were available for when God called them.

Sharon (04:49):

They were. They were. Isn't that neat?

Nicole (04:51):

Oh, I love that part of the story, and I love that God chose those lowly shepherds to announce his birth and just how beautiful their unabashed joy was at sharing the news with everyone who would listen. (Sharon: Yep) Oh. To have a heart full of joy like they did that night. It's really interesting, Sharon. I didn't realize how closely the shepherds would've understood about Jesus being that perfect sacrificial Lamb, cause the shepherds outside of Bethlehem would've been in charge of raising little lambs for sacrifice. So this would've been very significant for them.

Sharon (05:19):

Yes, it would have. And as time went on, and then they might have witnessed the crucifixion. (Nicole: Yeah) And the resurrection. If they accepted Christ as their Savior, those same shepherds would see the Lamb slain.

Nicole (05:30):

Wow. Very cool if you think about that.

Sharon (05:32):

Yeah. Oh. Okay but let's go back to Mary for a moment, Nicole. She's just given birth for the first time. I mean, just like that day, right? She's not home in a cushy bedroom. (Nicole: No) She doesn't have her aunts or sisters or friends around to help her. And she's never given birth before. And she, you know, she had no one except Joseph to help her.

Nicole (05:52):

Right.

Sharon (05:52):

She's just traveled a long distance, couldn't even find a place to give birth. Right? She's in some kind of stable. How ready do you think she was for a gang of shepherds to show up at the door of the stable?

Nicole (06:04):

I'm thinking not ready at all.

Sharon (06:07):

Oh, for crying out loud, would you have wanted to see anybody?

Nicole (06:09):

Oh my word. No. We had quite a few visitors when we had our first baby and it was overwhelming. And I was in a beautiful, clean little hospital room.

Sharon (06:16):

I can't even.

Nicole (06:17):

Oh my goodness. But she definitely would've had to have been gracious to receive them after just having a baby. And then, you know, Joseph and Mary both would've been exhausted by this point, I would imagine after traveling and then a long night giving birth.

Sharon (06:29):

And then surprise!

Nicole (06:30):

Oh, there's some shepherds.

Sharon (06:31):

Some shepherds are here. Here they are. Yeah.

Nicole (06:35):

It's a lot.

Sharon (06:36):

I'm trying to think of how I can apply this to daily life and I, I think this is how. I have to ask myself this question. Am I open to interruptions in December?

Nicole (06:45):

Oooh, That's a good question.

Sharon (06:46):

When I'm busy. Right?

Nicole (06:47):

Yeah.

Sharon (06:48):

Can I make time for a cup of Christmas tea if someone unexpectedly shows up at my door? Or am I irritated that they're wrecking my, um, perfect plans?

Nicole (06:57):

Right.

Sharon (06:58):

You know, I've gotta be open for interruptions. Really need to be open. So I, my heart is that I will pray for that kind of tender heart that welcomes the unexpected and watches for the ones that need extra loving.

Nicole (07:11):

Oh, I'm right there with you on that one. Unplanned things can really throw me off. I think that I need to be more open and pray the same thing about, you know, being more willing to accept the unexpected.

(Sharon: Yes) And maybe pray to be more kind to those awkward relatives that we all need to deal with at Christmas parties. (Sharon: Mm-hmm) Or be willing to host friends and their kiddos during the busy Christmas season. Because really people should take precedence over stuff.

Sharon (07:35):

Yes. And our time schedules.

Nicole (07:37):

Absolutely.

Sharon (07:38):

Yes. In fact, if we keep the simple Christmas, we'll have time.

Nicole (07:41):

Right.

Sharon (07:42):

For the unexpected cup of tea. (Nicole: Yeah) Or whatever. I mean, I'm saying cup of tea cause I'm British. I doubt Mary offered the shepherds a cup of tea.

Nicole (07:49):

Probably not.

Sharon (07:49):

Right. And here's the thing about hospitality too. The house does not have to be perfect. The hostess doesn't actually need to have to drop everything. I often invite my guests into my kitchen, hand them a paring knife and say, Hey, I'm still making the salad, you've got the cucumbers. Right?

Nicole (08:05):

Right.

Sharon (08:05):

Or maybe they help me wrap presents or address cards. Can I just make them family for a bit?

Nicole (08:10):

Oh.

Sharon (08:10):

Then it doesn't feel so like, Oh my word, I don't have time to sit and entertain you. Who said I needed to sit and entertain them? Why can't I just invite them into my life? (Nicole: Oh) I've actually found that engaging my guests and helping me run my home makes them feel more at home than sitting with me trying to be polite while I'm thinking of all the things I need to do.

Nicole (08:30):

That's a great point.

Sharon (08:31):

Yeah.

Nicole (08:33):

I love how you do that. We won't often have guests to stay overnight at our home right now because all the rooms are filled with multiple children's bunk beds. So we have a little limited space, but having people over to the house is hard for me sometimes because we are in that season of life. There's always toys on the floor. Always craft projects out.

Sharon (08:48):

Of course there are. Yes.

Nicole (08:49):

So, you know, getting over the need to have everything perfect or the feeling that my house is super in need of updating then, that I, I just can't host. You know, it's really hard for me to sometimes get out of my own way and just have people over and enjoy their company. (Sharon: Yeah) Something God is definitely working out in my heart.

Sharon (09:03):

Yes. Well, all we have to do is think of Mary welcoming shepherds to a stable.

Nicole (09:08):

Welcome to my stable.

Sharon (09:09):

This is the King of kings. (Nicole: Yeah) In a manger.

Nicole (09:12):

Pull up a bale of hay.

Sharon (09:13):

Yeah. Pull up a bale of hay.

Nicole (09:14):

That's true. Well now we're going to move on to our next portion of Luke 2. We'll be reading Luke 2:21-35. And I'll start with verse 21, Jesus Is Presented in the Temple, "Eight days later when the baby was circumcised he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived."

Sharon (09:33):

(I love how they obeyed God in that.) "Then it was time for their purification offering as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child. So his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord."

Nicole (09:45):

"The law of the Lord says if a woman's first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord."

Sharon (09:50):

"So they offered the sacrifice required in the Law of the Lord, 'Either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons'."

Nicole (09:59):

"At that time there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout. (Oh my goodness.)(Sharon: That's okay) He was righteous and devout and was eagerly awaiting for the Messiah to come and rescue Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him."

Sharon (10:15):

"And had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Messiah."

Nicole (10:21):

"That day, the Spirit led him to the temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the Baby Jesus to the Lord as a law required,"

Sharon (10:28):

"Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God saying,"

Nicole (10:32):

"Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace as you have promised."

Sharon (10:37):

"I have seen your salvation,"

Nicole (10:39):

"Which you have prepared for all the people."

Sharon (10:41):

"He is a Light to reveal God to the nations and he is the Glory of your people, Israel."

Nicole (10:47):

"Jesus' parents were amazed at what was being said about him."

Sharon (10:50):

"Then Simeon blessed them and he said to Mary, the baby's mother, this child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall and many others to rise. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him."

Nicole (11:05):

"As a result the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed and his sword will pierce your very soul"

Sharon (11:12):

Whew! What stands out to you, Nicole, about this passage the most?

Nicole (11:16):

Well, first I'm struck by Mary and Joseph's devoted hearts to God. You know, they named him Jesus and they were probably very poor and they, but they still gave a small offering and obeyed the law.

Sharon (11:25):

Yeah, yeah. They sure did.

Nicole (11:27):

And next Simeon, he's a really interesting character. Mary didn't know that God had promised him that he'd live until he saw the Messiah or that this had been a lifelong dream of his. So for this older man to come up and fawn over her baby and even for her to let him hold Jesus (Sharon: Yes) was really very remarkable. You know, Mary had such a kind heart. She really seems to have just gone with the flow with all these unusual events surrounding Jesus' birth and his life here.

Sharon (11:52):

She really did right from the beginning. Oh, I'm going to have a baby, although I've never been with a man. May it be to me, as you have said. (Nicole: Yeah) That's our Mary. She went with the flow.

Nicole (12:01):

Oh, we're traveling while I'm pregnant. Here we go. Oh baby born in a stable.

Sharon (12:04):

Oh, shepherds showing up on the doorstep. Oh man taking my baby away from me and holding it. You know, I never did well with that. (Nicole: Mm-hmm) I loved holding my babies so much and someone would say, can I hold your baby? And I'd be like, well, okay.

Nicole (12:19):

Do you have to?

Sharon (12:20):

And the whole time they were holding them, I'm like, maybe they'll cry a little and I can take them back. Oh, let me take them now. I was terrible. Oh, so go Mary.

Nicole (12:27):

Yeah, she was very gracious.

Sharon (12:28):

Yes. She didn't even know Simeon.

Nicole (12:30):

I know.

Sharon (12:31):

Yeah.

Nicole (12:31):

Very interesting.

Sharon (12:32):

So okay, let's talk about being tenderhearted in our homes when unexpected, well we already did. We talked about being tender hearted in our homes when unexpected company comes to call. Now we're gonna talk about honoring older people who have perhaps outlived their spouses and their siblings. How can we make Christmas special for them?

Nicole (12:48):

Oh, that's good.

Sharon (12:49):

So I wanna practice the rule of the one thing here in Nicole. I know a lot of elderly people and I cannot visit them all, but could I visit one? Could I just bring a little gift and sit with them and listen to their stories? That's my goal this year.

Nicole (13:01):

I like that.

Sharon (13:02):

To visit one, to look beyond my own enjoyment of the holiday. And I do like to make it nice for me and Ray and my kids. Could I make it nice for one other person?

Nicole (13:11):

I like that idea. Um, so we were trick or treating last year and we went to this house that we hadn't gone up to before cause the light was always off and the light was on this year and we went up the driveway. (Sharon: Oh) We're off in the woods and there's little log cabins and it's rough trick or treating time. But we got up to the door and this sweet little old lady answered the door and she was so apologetic she didn't have candy for us because no one ever came to her door before.

Sharon (13:33):

Oh, bless her.

Nicole (13:34):

She didn't know there were any kids in the neighborhood. So she felt so bad and we were just like, oh, she never gets visitors. So my girls, when we were leaving her driveway, they were like, mom, we need to bake her Christmas cookies and deliver that to her.

Sharon (13:47):

Oh my goodness.

Nicole (13:47):

So how sweet. We have a couple little older couples in our neighborhood that we bring Christmas cookies to that, you know, we kind of feel like it's a little bit of something. Maybe a treat for them cuz they don't do a lot of baking. Well I hope it's a treat for them cause they are the aforementioned, overly sprinkled cookies.

Sharon (14:03):

Of course they are.

Nicole (14:04):

So who knows, let's hope it's the thought that counts.

Sharon (14:06):

Right, right. Oh that's neat.

Nicole (14:08):

And Sharon, you know, one thing I love that our church is doing this year is they're doing these sweet little care packages that they put together. And all you need to do is let the Connect to Care Team know that you're interested and they can give you a package.

Sharon (14:19):

Yeah I noticed that. I Like that.

Nicole (14:19):

And they connect you with an older couple or a person.

Sharon (14:22):

Yeah. They even put the package together for you.

Nicole (14:24):

It's so simple.

Sharon (14:25):

It is.

Nicole (14:25):

I love that idea. (Sharon: Yep) We tried to do it last year, then we got sick. We decided not to spread our germs to them.

Sharon (14:31):

But you would have if you had not had covid.

Nicole ([14:34](#)):

Yeah. The girls were very excited. We may try to do it again this year.

Sharon ([14:36](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. It's kind of one of the things that's so sweet about belonging to a church. Yeah. Because they give you opportunities, you know, to do things like that. Fill the Samaritan's Purse Shoe Boxes and you know, so it's just a good thing. It really is.

Nicole ([14:48](#)):

I think you can benefit from other people's gifts. If they're really, really good at gift packages and I'm not, they've already made it, then it makes it easier for me to go and visit. It's wonderful.

Sharon ([14:56](#)):

That's beautiful. Yeah. Okay. So we're going to accept the unexpected company in our house. We're going to love on at least one elderly lonely person.

Nicole ([15:07](#)):

Yeah, around us or in our life. Yep. I love it.

Sharon ([15:09](#)):

All right, well we get one more example here we go, in our tenderhearted pursuit. So we're gonna finish reading Luke 2 with verses just 36 through 38, the prophecy of Anna. "Anna, a prophet was also there in the temple. She was the daughter of Penuel from the tribe of Asher. And she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years." (Nicole: Oh). I know.

Nicole ([15:33](#)):

"Then she lived as a widow to the age of 84. She never left the temple, but stayed there day and night worshipping God with fasting and praying."

Sharon ([15:41](#)):

"She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem." So here we have another old person who actually lived a pretty tragic life. No kids, only seven years of being married before she lost her husband, (Nicole: Oh I know, that's sad) and then a life alone. Oh man. A lifetime of living near or in the temple actually. She was there every day. (Nicole: Yeah) So Nicole, what are rules about widows who have no one to care for them? And did she actually live in the temple? I'm curious.

Nicole ([16:18](#)):

Yeah, I know. I'm not entirely sure, but when I looked it up, Gotquestions.org said that she might have been given housing in the temple because she was a prophetess it said. Or she had housing really close by. But either way she was there every day.

Sharon (16:30):

Which is sweet.

Nicole (16:32):

It is. You know, cause being a widow back in that time and being childless to boot, it left her with the very few options for provision. With no one to care for her she would've relied upon her church for her daily needs and how cool that God rewarded that daily devotion and allowed her to see the Messiah with her own eyes. (Sharon: Yeah) You know, some commentaries think that she was 84 and others think she might have been as old as 104.

Sharon (16:54):

Really?

Nicole (16:54):

Yeah.

Sharon (16:54):

Wow.

Nicole (16:56):

So either way, that's a really long time to wait and fast and pray for the Messiah.

Sharon (17:00):

It surely is. And she did it every day. And Oh God rewarded her as well as Simeon.

Nicole (17:05):

That's so cool.

Sharon (17:05):

You know, there'd been 400 years of silence from God.

Nicole (17:10):

That's right.

Sharon (17:10):

That's a long time to wait for God to speak again. There were no prophets during the time. There were no new books of the Bible written during that time, you know, kind of thing. It was a silent time. And, and yet Simeon and Anna, having not seen anything from the past, having not seen anything in their entire lives, were still waiting. Were still longing, were still believing for Messiah. That kind of faith is astounding.

Nicole (17:35):

Oh it is.

Sharon (17:36):

It really, really is.

Nicole (17:37):

They are wonderful examples of that.

Sharon (17:38):

I love that. I love that. Well in this case, you know, Anna was elderly too, but she was also very poor. (Nicole: Yes) So I wanna focus now on what do we do for the poor and needy at Christmas time. Again, we cannot feed the whole world. We can't visit every homeless shelter, but we could do one thing, right? (Nicole: Yeah) So we could do a Christmas shoebox. We just talked about that. And you know, I have to confess to you, I am not a, I'm not initially a good Christmas shoe boxer because I hate shopping. I never have liked shopping. I don't wanna shop. I never wanna shop. But Ray picked up a Christmas box from our church this year and brought it home to me. I was not at church cause I was on a retreat and he's like, and this is Ray, (Nicole: Yes) I picked up a Christmas box, here. I'm like, oh, okay. So who's filling the box?

Nicole (18:27):

Right.

Sharon (18:27):

Would that be me? But I went to Walmart and all of a sudden I had in my mind the person I wanted to shop for. (Nicole: Oh) I wanted the older girl, you know, the 10 to 14 year old one?

Nicole (18:37):

They're harder to shop for.

Sharon (18:38):

They are harder to shop for and you know, they're not as cute anymore.

Nicole (18:42):

Right.

Sharon (18:42):

Right. So, but I, I had her in my head. I had a theme, Nicole.

Nicole (18:47):

Oh my goodness.

Sharon (18:48):

I know, all sort of pastels. And I had a little cap for her in case she was in a sunny climate and she needed a cap. And then I got some pastel socks for her in case it was a colder climate. So I was kinda covering all my bases. I spent a really lot of money on that shoebox and then they wouldn't have all fit in

the shoebox. (Nicole: Yeah) So I had to get a bigger shoebox. So then I found a bigger shoebox so it would all fit in. And then I had to jam it shut.

Nicole (19:13):

Yes.

Sharon (19:13):

So God changed my heart about the shoebox thing and I'm so absolutely glad that I did.

Nicole (19:20):

I'm so happy.

Sharon (19:20):

Because now I'm praying for her. And I even put in a picture of me and Ray and I wrote her a Bible verse, the whole thing and they have this tracking system.

Nicole (19:28):

Yes. That's new this year. I love it.

Sharon (19:29):

And I'm like, you know what, I actually now wanna track it because my, you know, the Grinch's heart that was too small? I had a really small shoebox heart. It grew three sizes that day.

Nicole (19:40):

Oh, a Grinch shoebox.

Sharon (19:44):

But I needed, I needed my church and my husband to spur me on. But that's my one thing.

Nicole (19:50):

Oh I love it. I love that our church is doing that now. Yeah.

Sharon (19:53):

Yes. It helps me.

Nicole (19:53):

Yeah. We did one this year for the same reason. It's hard to find, it's just, it's one more thing for me to go find a shoebox distribution center and return it to the place on time. (Sharon: Yeah) Not my strong suit. But we got one too this year and it was so fun.

Sharon (20:06):

Oh good.

Nicole (20:06):

For the girls to fill it. Same thing. Spent more than we thought. Filled, they brought this little shoebox from church and it barely did half of them. So I found this big, boot box in the basement that we filled. But it was fun. And you can add the tracking, you can also add like a little devotion and I think they send a book and maybe they check in with the kiddo about Jesus. So I thought let's try that this year too.

Sharon (20:26):

Oh lovely.

Nicole (20:27):

Cause that's really important.

Sharon (20:27):

Yes it is.

Nicole (20:28):

You pray for them.

Sharon (20:29):

Yeah, yeah.

Nicole (20:29):

But it was really fun. So I love that they're doing that this year.

Sharon (20:32):

I do too.

Nicole (20:34):

I know our church has a couple of outreaches that we can be involved with as well. So you know, if you don't go to our church, obviously look into your own church and see, you know, we have a neighborhood food pantry on our church property.

Sharon (20:44):

Yep. Yep, we do.

Nicole (20:44):

Also they provide, our House of Hope serves meals to the hungry as well. So you can go and serve there.

Sharon (20:51):

I love it. So there are many opportunities. Choose at least one.

Nicole (20:55):

Yes.

Sharon (20:55):

And if we free ourselves of all the other things, we have the time to choose one.

Nicole (21:00):

Right. Right. Being open to seeing them too. Cause even outside of the church, they do Toys for Tots and the coats for kiddos and the Angel Tree.

Sharon (21:08):

Yes. There's so many.

Nicole (21:08):

There's so many opportunities to do a simple little thing to bless someone at Christmas time.

Sharon (21:13):

Right. And it's what you want your children to see.

Nicole (21:14):

Absolutely.

Sharon (21:15):

You want you to see them. You know, the year that our grandkids lived with us, when their daddy was in Afghanistan, I went shopping with Gabriel to buy a Christmas present for his mom. You know, I did that with all the kids so that Mary still got Christmas presents cause (Nicole: That's so sweet) you know, I didn't know if Angel's presents from Afghanistan would arrive in time and it was just, you know, it was gonna be a hard Christmas for her without her husband.

Nicole (21:36):

Oh yeah.

Sharon (21:37):

So we're pulling into the Walmart in Portsmouth right on Route 1 and there's a homeless man looking very shaggy with his little sign held out. And Gabriel said, who is that Nina. And I usually ignore those homeless people with their signs. And I told Gabriel, I said, he's someone that doesn't have a place to live, probably honey. (Nicole: Right) And he's asking us to help him. Well why didn't we help him, Nina?

Nicole (22:06):

Oh my goodness.

Sharon (22:07):

I'm like, oh Lord, forgive me.

Nicole (22:09):

Children's hearts.

Sharon (22:10):

We were in the Walmart and I said, you know, Gabriel, we're gonna buy him a Walmart gift card and when we come out, if he's still there, we're gonna give it to him and then we're gonna pray for him. So sure enough, he was still out there.

Nicole (22:22):

Oh wow.

Sharon (22:22):

And I unrolled my little window. And then I gave him his, you know, his little gift card to Walmart where he could buy whatever he needed to buy. (Nicole: Oh) And then Gabriel prayed on the way home. He was in the backseat, you know, in his little car-- I don't know if he was still in the car seat or booster, whatever. God, please help him find a place to sleep tonight. Help him to find a job. And all of a sudden something that I see too often--

Nicole (22:45):

Yeah.

Sharon (22:47):

Was magnified for me because of a little boy. (Nicole: **Oh, that's sweet**) And I still haven't done this. Maybe I really will do it now because I'm talking about it in a podcast. I want to have gift cards ready and I want to have little bags in my car ready so that, you know, it has like a little kind bar in it and an apple or something. A pack of gum and then a gift card Yes. To like a Walmart so that when you're stopped at a stoplight and you see the person, you've got the bag.

Nicole (23:16):

Right.

Sharon (23:18):

You've got something there.

Nicole (23:19):

And you're giving them a safe gift. Cause you're always worried about--- (Sharon: I know) So it's a fine line. And I feel like I tend to go too safe and just ignore them. I know I do. I'm like just be safe and just don't. But I love having that. I love that idea Sharon, having something ready that you could give them that would actually bless them.

Sharon (23:33):

Bless them. Yes. Yes.

Nicole (23:34):

And not encourage them for anything they're doing.

Sharon (23:34):

A pair of socks. I dunno. Just, just stuff.

Nicole (23:40):

Just something.

Sharon (23:40):

The last one I saw, which I had nothing for cause I still haven't done my bags said, Every little bit helps.

Nicole (23:46):

Mm, I know.

Sharon (23:47):

So.

Nicole (23:47):

It's so tough.

Sharon (23:47):

Wow. Wow, wow. So, well, okay, on that note, let's read some short passages from the Bible about giving. Nicole, why don't you read what Jesus has to say about having a tender heart? Because this is convicting. (Nicole: Yes) And Matthew 25:31-40.

Nicole (24:03):

All right. "But when the Son of Man comes in his glory and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. I was naked and you gave me clothing. I was sick and you cared for me. I was in prison and you visited me. Then the righteous ones will reply, Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you or thirsty and give you something to drink or a stranger and show you hospitality or naked and give you clothing? When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you? And the King will say, I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me."

Sharon (25:05):

Isn't that the most profound thing, that Jesus receives it as a gift to him? When Gabriel and I actually gave something to that homeless man, Jesus said, thank you.

Nicole (25:16):

That's amazing.

Sharon (25:17):

It's just such a unique way to think about it. And yet it's, it's what the Lord tells us.

Nicole (25:22):

Absolutely.

Sharon (25:23):

That when we're giving, when we're welcoming, he is blessed by it too. (Nicole: Mm-hmm) Not just the person we're doing it for.

Nicole (25:31):

Yeah. That's a remarkable thought. We need to remember that more.

Sharon (25:36):

We do. We do.

Nicole (25:38):

I say it to my girls a lot. So when you're kind like how you treat each other, it's like how you treat Jesus. You know, if you're kind to each other, it's like being kind to Jesus.

Sharon (25:46):

Kind to Jesus. Yeah. Yeah.

Nicole (25:46):

Yeah. But kids seem to understand that better than we do sometimes.

Sharon (25:48):

They do. We kinda lose a little bit of that in our cynicism.

Nicole (25:51):

Oh, for sure.

Sharon (25:52):

We really do. (Nicole: Yeah) Yeah. You know, and I was thinking as I was reading this how Mary and Joseph honored God in this. He was naked and they clothed him.

Nicole (26:02):

Oh, those little strips of cloth.

Sharon (26:03):

Right? And they showed hospitality to strangers, those shepherds. And then later on, the wise men. (Nicole: They did. Yeah) So they also did this. And God notices. I think that's the other thing to just realize. God notices when we're kind and when we're not. And it matters. It matters.

Nicole (26:23):

It matters more than our nicely decorated Christmas tree

Sharon (26:25):

It actually does.

Nicole (26:27):

It does cause it matters for eternity for his kingdom, not for our momentary pleasure here.

Sharon (26:28):

It does, it does. Oh my goodness we have got to stay simple so we can be tenderhearted. (Nicole: Yes) They go together. If we're too busy, (Nicole: There's no time) our hearts are closed. (Nicole: Yeah) Because we're too busy getting all our stuff done. We can be very self-centered at Christmas time.

Nicole (26:46):

Oh, so easily. Oh my goodness.

Sharon (26:47):

Oh man, man, man, man. All right. Well I'm gonna close this out with these words from James 2:1-8 and then 13-17. James also is a shoot-straight hitter with his words.

Nicole (26:59):

Yes, he pulls no punches.

Sharon (27:00):

Okay. So here we go. Well at least he starts with 'my dear'

Nicole (27:05):

He's, he's easing into it.

Sharon (27:05):

(Before the punch.) "My dear brothers and sisters, how can you claim to have faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ if you favor some people over others? For example, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewelry, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in dirty clothes. If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, stand over there or sit on the floor. Well, doesn't this discrimination show that your judgements are guided by evil motives? Listen to me, dear brothers and sisters, hasn't God chosen the poor in this world to be rich in faith? Aren't they the ones who will inherit the kingdom he promised to those who love him, but you dishonor the poor? Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court? Aren't they the ones who slander Jesus Christ, whose noble name you bear? Yes, indeed. It is good when you obey the royal law as found in the scriptures, love your neighbor as yourself. But if you favor some people over others, you are committing a sin. You are guilty of breaking the law. There will be no mercy for those who have shown no mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you. What good is it dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith, but don't show it by your actions, Can that kind of faith save anyone? Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing and you say goodbye, have a good day. Stay warm and eat well. But then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do. So you see, faith by itself isn't enough unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless." Oh boy.

Nicole (28:48):

That's something to sit and meditate on, isn't it?

Sharon (28:50):

Yes it is. Yes, it is.

Nicole (28:52):

My goodness. It's actually a sin.

Sharon (28:53):

Mm-hmm. Yep. And I can see that. I can see that. Oh God bless you, be well. But I'm not giving you one thing.

Nicole (29:00):

Right.

Sharon (29:01):

And again, we can get over guilty. We can't do everything. (Nicole: Right) But can we do the one thing? Can we have a tender heart?

Nicole (29:09):

Well, and if we are praying and asking God for that one thing and that one person, he's going to give us discernment.

Sharon (29:14):

He will.

Nicole (29:15):

He's gonna make it clear that this is the one to bless today.

Sharon (29:18):

Yeah. This is the one I've chosen for you.

Nicole (29:19):

We don't have to worry about getting overwhelmed with saving everyone or doing the wrong person. God's going to guide us as we ask him.

Sharon (29:26):

Yes he is. Yes he is. Now let's pray.

Nicole (29:27):

Yes.

Sharon ([29:28](#)):

Oh Heavenly Father, forgive us when we have hard hearts or a cynicism gets in the way of wanting to help people who have genuine needs. Forgive us when we feel too busy to visit the older person, the lonely person. Forgive us when interruptions at our door annoy us rather than being seen as sent by you. Father, may this Christmas be one where we keep our hearts tender, where we're tender to your voice, most of all Lord. Who are the ones you have chosen for us to love and minister to this Christmas? Show us Father, and help us to be faithful to obeying the command to love others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Nicole ([30:17](#)):

Amen. Well, that's a wrap for season six of our Sweet Selah Moments Podcast. From studying heart lessons to convicting words about being tenderhearted, this season has had me thinking and growing and changing. I'm so thankful for God's word and how he speaks through it, helping us live wisely. We hope that your Christmas is rich in love and good deeds. Friends, we wish you quiet moments by your tree and sacrificial moments where you reach out and love someone in need. May the Christ of Christmas dwell in your hearts and give you great joy. Please write and let us know you listen. Please give at SweetSelah.org/donations and please watch for season seven starting sometime in February, 2023, Lord willing. Have a simple, tenderhearted Merry Christmas.

Speaker 1 ([31:02](#)):

We are so glad you stopped for a while with us. The Sweet Selah Moments Podcast is a cooperative production of Word Radio and Sweet Selah Ministries. More information about this podcast can be found @SweetSelah.org. Thank you for joining us.