

Story #2. Let Your Gentleness Be Evident to All

A young student was taking a walk one day with a kindly professor who commonly treated his students as friends. As they went along, lying on the edge of the path, they saw a pair of old shoes, which they supposed to belong to a poor man who was employed in a field close by, and who had nearly finished his day's work. The student turned to the professor, saying: "Let us play the man a trick: we will hide his shoes and conceal ourselves behind those bushes, and wait to see his perplexity when he cannot find them."

"My friend," answered the professor, "we should never amuse ourselves at the expense of the poor. But you are comparatively rich and may give yourself a much greater pleasure by means of the poor man. Put a coin into each shoe, and then we will hide ourselves and watch how the discovery affects him."

The student did so, and they both placed themselves behind the bushes nearby. The poor man soon finished his work and came across the field to the path where he had left his coat and shoes. While putting on his coat, he slipped his foot into one of the shoes; but feeling something hard, he stooped down to feel what it was, and found the coin. Astonishment and wonder were seen upon his countenance. He gazed upon the coin, turned it around, and looked at it again and again. He then looked around him on all sides, but no person was to be seen. He now put the money back into his pocket and proceeded to put on the other shoe: but his surprise was doubled on finding the other coin. His feelings overcame him; he fell upon his knees, looked up to heaven and uttered aloud a fervent thanksgiving, in which he spoke of his wife, sick and helpless, and his children without bread, whom the timely bounty, from some unknown hand, would save from perishing.

The student stood there deeply affected, and his eyes filled with tears.

"Now," said the professor, "are you not much better pleased than if you had played your intended trick?" The youth replied, "You have taught me a lesson which I will never forget. I feel now the truth of those words, which I never understood before: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What do you think the lesson is that the student learnt?
2. Why was the professor's message important for the child to understand?
3. How could you link this story about giving and kindness to what is happening around us in society today?