

"For The Love of Madi"

September 22, 2002

Most of us are familiar with O'Henry's wonderful short story about sacrificial love entitled "The Gift of the Magi". In this story, two New Yorkers sell their most valued possessions to buy Christmas gifts for each other. Unknown to her husband, the wife sells her hair in order to purchase a chain for his watch, while he secretly sells the watch to buy her a pair of combs.

This week in Wellesley, a little nine year old girl named Mariah had more than eleven inches cut off her long beautiful hair ... hair which extended all the way down to her waist. Why? Because Mariah donated her hair to "Locks of Love", a non-profit organization that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children suffering from long-term medical hair loss. But that's not the end of the story ... Mariah's five year old sister Madi had lost her soft blond hair to chemotherapy last year so, in Mariah's own words, "Around that time, I thought I would grow my hair through the year ... and donate it for a wig."

Why is it that some people give so sacrificially while others are so selfish? Being a minister, I often pondered that question and have come to the conclusion that the answer has a lot to do with our sense of gratitude.

More and more, I see people (especially children) demanding their "rights" and seeking after what they believe they are "entitled to". Somewhere ... somehow ... the notion of gratitude has been swept under the carpet of social norms.

That's what makes people like Mariah so special ... indeed, the Bible speaks to this same issue ... the apostle Paul speaks of having "gratitude in your hearts to God" (Col. 3:16). To say it in a more current version, as the recent Cheryl Crowe song states, "It's not having what you want, but wanting what you have."

I believe that in His grace, God has given me everything I could possibly desire ... salvation through His Son and freedom from "my rights" and "my entitlements". Trust me; it's a nice way to live!

So ... here's a toast to Mariah ... and to all who have learned the secret of contentment... now excuse me while I listen again to that Cheryl Crowe song!