Commentary: Man rescues police officer from burning car, explains why

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"There is value in every human life. We are all children of God and I can't imagine just watching anyone burn. No matter what other people have done to me, or other officers, I thought, 'This guy deserves to make it home safely to his family.'"

This is how Daylan McLee of Uniontown, Pa., describes his decision to [rescue a police officer from a mangled police car](#) as flames were spreading into the cabin. Police officials have credited McLee with saving the life of Officer Jay Hanley. Uniontown Police Lt. Thomas Kolencik's voice cracked as he told reporters at the scene, "Daylan actually said, 'I'm not going to let him die.' There's just no words to describe, you know."

Here's what made McLee's bravery especially unusual: He has been the victim of injustice in the past.

McLee, who is Black, spent a year in jail after an incident in March 2016 before a jury acquitted him of all charges after reviewing security video. That was a year away from his children and his mother, who was ill at the time and passed away last year.

He had another run-in with officers a few months ago, when he ran from a porch gathering after officers in plain clothes and vests approached with guns drawn. He said they did not announce they were officers and that he stopped running and put his hands behind his head when they said they were police. He said he was charged with fleeing and resisting arrest, but added that during the arrest, an officer kicked him in the face through a

fence, splitting his lip. He said the use of force was caught on a security camera and that he plans to fight the charges.

After saving Officer Hanley's life, McLee said he couldn't blame every police officer for his bad interactions with some: "We need to work on our humanity. … That's the main problem of this world." He added: "I don't want to be called a hero. I just want to be known as an individual who's an upstanding man."

The true source of our personal worth

McLee points the way forward when he states: "There is value in every human life. We are all children of God."

However, his second sentence explains his first in ways that might surprise our secular culture.

It is conventional wisdom in our capitalistic society that our value as humans lies in our abilities and achievements.

One of the reasons racial discrimination is so wrong is it holds back racial minorities from their rightful opportunities to become all they can become.

According to our culture, we are what we do, how much we earn, how we look, what we own, where we live and who we know. Everyone should have the same right to achieve success as everyone else.

The claim that every person deserves the same opportunities to achieve what our society defines as success is absolutely true. But the way our society defines success is absolutely false.

You and I did not earn the right to be born. We brought nothing into this world, and we will take nothing from it. The abilities and gifts with which we strive to achieve were given to us by our Creator through our parents

and by the Holy Spirit.

I did nothing to deserve the manual dexterity with which I am typing these words and the eyesight with which I am reading them, or the blessings of a loving family and comfortable home in which to grow up.

Everything I have done has been done with abilities I developed but did not create. The same is true for you.

The source of our personal worth is not found in our capacities or circumstances. And that fact is very good news.

'Act, O Lord, for your name's sake'

In Jeremiah 14, the prophet prays for his sinful people: "Though our iniquities testify against us, act, O Lord, for your name's sake" (v. 7a).

He does not pray for God to forgive them because they deserve intrinsically to be forgiven. Nor because they have done anything to merit such mercy and grace. Nor because they can do anything to earn such compassion.

He prays for God to forgive his people on the basis of God's nature, not theirs.

We often think Jesus died to save us because we were worth saving. The fact is, he died to save us because he loves us (Romans 5:8). In fact, he loves us enough to die for us again, right now. And he loves us because he *is* love (1 John 4:8). Not because we were or are lovable. Not because there is anything in us that merits his love.

Our Savior loves us simply because he loves us. As Frederick Buechner notes, "God doesn't love people because of who they are, but because of who God is."

As a result, there is nothing you must do to earn his love and nothing you can do to lose it.

No matter what happens with the pandemic and the economy, God will still love you. No matter your race or life experiences, God loves you. No matter your past sins or future failures, God still loves you.

'We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers'

Now it's our turn: "By this we know love, that [Jesus] laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers" (1 John 3:16).

Because God commands us to "love one another" (John 13:34), we know we can. He would not tell us to do something we cannot do with his help.

In fact, the Holy Spirit can produce the "fruit" of love in our lives (Galatians 5:22). But the Spirit can give only what we will receive.

If we will ask God to give us his love for those we meet today, and then act in the belief he has answered our prayer, our love will change the world one soul at a time.

Why is the fact of God's unchanging, unchangeable love relevant to you right now?

How will you make it relevant to someone today?

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