Lilac Pearls
By Maureen (Woods) Williamson

Those who know me personally know that I love beautiful things. Not everything, but what I do like, I love and cherish. Things like my husband, family, brothers and sisters in Christ, friends, and my wardrobe.

I have a jacket that is a favorite item of mine. Some in America wouldn’t call it a jacket, but more of a sheer top. But where I come from in South Africa, it is a ‘jacket.’ My ‘jacket’ has a chic and elegant fit with many plum-colored pearls attached that matches the garment color, about sixty to be exact. Each of the six panels displays ten of these pearls vertically.

Recently I acquired a longer jacket that is just ‘blah’ in comparison to my most favorite plum jacket. It is made of the same fabric only a color that is a much lighter shade that I will call lilac.

‘How can I make something wonderful of this blah looking jacket,’ I was thinking? ‘Ah ha, I’ll make it a replica of the plum jacket.’ My heart leapt with joy, ‘Yes, that’s the solution.’

I happen to have a friend whose name is Leah, and she is a marvelous seamstress. She is also a wonderful sister in the Lord, taking opportunity to tell people about Jesus every chance she gets. Her family does the same. Leah could make this alteration with her eyes closed, I know because she has done other amazing alterations for me. She is the talk of town when it comes to doing something with a needle and thread. Now, if she just has time to fit me into her busy days.

So, the hunt is on, I must find ‘Lilac Pearls.’ This would not be such an easy task in Payson, Arizona where there are more shops closing their doors than opening for business. Pearls, beads and such, may not be so readily available. As I thought about it, I decided they do not have to be pearls, nor do they have to be exactly lilac. But they have to be shades of lilac, or a combination that goes very well with lilac. And of course, they must be exquisite.

I enlisted my husband Bill to help in the search, and off we went. I consider what an amazing husband God has given me, we like to think that every new day is a new adventure, and because we think this way, it’s true, every day is an adventure for us.

Every journey into Payson starts with a scenic thirteen-mile drive up through the high desert into the pine forested area that the town is nestled in. Payson is nearly two thousand feet higher than our 3000-foot elevation in Deer Creek where we live.

Our first stop was to be the ‘Cowboy Store.’ We call it that because it looks like a old style Trading Post, and is filled with old west type merchandise, and the previous owner is a bit of a famous local cowboy who has written about his exploits ranching in the area.
The Cowboy Store, we came to find out, had lots of beads, but no pearls of color. As I looked through the various strings of beads I realized they would work just as well, provided I could find the right size and color. String by string we looked. There was nothing even close to lilac.

We moved through other parts of the store looking at amazing rocks, precious stones, and crystals from all over the world. Then I stepped back to the beads once again for a last look of desperation. My eyes moved over the familiar beads and on toward the far end of the rack. I caught the glimmer of lilac behind some odds and ends hanging on the last hook. There they were, pressed into a corner nearly hidden from view.

I pointed toward them and spoke to Bill. ‘Those are perfect. They will do.’

Bill stepped up to rack and unwound the tangled strings. Once free, he handed them to me. I was amazed that we found beads even prettier than pearls, if that’s possible, in the right size, and right color.

But now, the important question, ‘What does the string cost?’

Bill and I often walk through rough financial times. We do have money coming in, but because we had built a house with plans to sell and no buyers were coming forward to purchase it our monthly bills, including the mortgage, ate up every penny. Finding ten or twenty dollars for something outside the budget was often difficult.

The prices on the strings of beads had been running from twenty to forty dollars. The higher end, forty dollars was out of the question. I had hoped for something at the twenty-dollar end. Each string had the needed sixty beads, so only one string would be purchased.

I fumbled at the small tag with the price, and rolled it over between my fingers. ‘Twelve dollars, wonderful!’ I exclaimed out loud so Bill could hear. We had that amount of money.

Once at the checkout, the sales lady explained that all beads were on sale 20 percent off, bringing the cost down to ten dollars and some pennies. It had been a successful hunt, and at the first stop in Payson.

My joy was full as we left the cowboy variety shop with my string of lilac beads. In my mind’s eye I could see the whole lilac jacket remodel and I was pleased with what I saw.

We went on our way, and headed for our local Walmart and picked up a few things we needed. As we were driving out of the parking lot, we both noticed a young Native American woman with a sad face at the side of the road. She was holding up a piece of cardboard with words saying, ‘I am hungry and so are my two young children.’

Bill and I are in the habit of noticing people on the sides of the road expressing any sort of need. We looked at each other with the very same thought in mind. We had just spent our last ten dollars on stupid beads. Oh, how my heart was pricked, here was somebody with a real need and we had nothing to give. ‘How frivolous we were,’ I thought.

The world is spinning fast through the last days according to the Bible, and I consider myself an Ambassador for Christ, and yet my thoughts this day were on silly beads instead of the real issues of life. Salvation for others, and meeting the needs of those less fortunate than we are, should be at the top of our list of things to do. But that wasn’t the case for me this day, and that really pricked my conscience.

The lovely young girl just stared blankly at us as Bill and I drove away in silence. Without saying a word to each other we both knew that we had missed a God ordered opportunity. We could have stopped and spoken to the young lady, but we instinctively knew she did need money, and we were unable to help. If we couldn’t help in her specific need then it would be unlikely she would pay much attention to our words.
This Indian woman’s beautiful face still haunts me even now.

There are so many legitimate hurts and needs in people’s lives. We do not have to look very far to see them. Little effort is required of us, we just need to see, and then do something, anything. Even the smallest gift will help. Every act done by a Christian is for the extension of God’s kingdom and will not go unrewarded. We don’t do it for the reward, but we love to help because Jesus always wants to ease human suffering and so we instinctively do too.

We’re not of the mind set either, that says, ‘You have to meet every need.’ It is important for us to hear from the Lord and therefore know when just the right time is for giving. Some tell us you can’t give to this type person. Well, what type person are we talking about? Should we stereotype people? Each individual is different with their own needs and motives. God is the author of true discernment and we simply need to hear his voice and obey. We won’t go wrong.

Much later Bill and I couldn’t shake our experience of that day. We spoke about it several times and finally agreed after praying about the matter that we would keep a five, ten, or even a twenty-dollar bill stashed in our car so that we would not be caught off guard in the future. We would assure the money would be in place on payday each month. If we could find ten dollars for beads, surely we could find it to help someone in need when the Lord prompts us to do so.

It matters not what the amount is, or what the person does with the money, but it does matter that we are awake and aware to needs that jump up in front of us. We can be the loving and caring arms, legs, and mouth of Jesus all the time. Jesus comes to the rescue of sad and hurting people, so we should also. This is where the joy of Christianity resides, being available, kind, wise, and always looking for the opportunity to make a difference in someone’s life.

We felt so bad that we had missed this person’s need that we prayed God would miraculously provide more cash so we could be ready next time.

The very next day while this picture was fresh in our minds, we were again in Payson and picked up our mail. An envelope with a Phoenix postmark and no other identification was waiting for us in our post box. Even our name and address had been typed so that there was no hand writing to analyze.

When we opened the envelope, $100 fell out. Nothing else was in the envelope, no note of explanation, only the five twenty-dollar bills. We realized immediately that God had heard our cry and provided just as we asked. We quickly tucked some of it away for future use.

This concreted our desire to see, and do, more for the cause of Jesus Christ. We even went back looking for the young woman, to bless her, but today it was raining and she was not there. Perhaps she will be there next time and we will do what our hearts tell us to do, and with great joy and rejoicing.

I’ve told you the story of my ‘Lilac Pearls,’ I’m just wondering what your ‘Lilac Pearl’ is.


Nothing can compare to living a life of obedience to Jesus Christ. The reward far outweighs the inconvenience, or discomfort.

Let us arise and complete the work of our Lord, and let us remember that the Gospel is not for sissies. Know that each disciple died a cruel death, except for one, John. Should we not also be ready to give it all?

God never promised us a ‘rose garden,’ like the song lyrics say. But God did promise us
eternity with him where there is no pain, sorrow, sickness, nor regret. Only joy forever more will be found there for those who know and accept that Jesus is Lord of all.

One glorious day every one of us will stand before Jesus, and account for the things we did in the body. Only those who have been washed with the pure blood of Jesus and have turned away from this world with all its temptations, in preference for God’s kingdom, will have the unspeakable blessing of living hereafter in God’s presence.

Pearls and beads and such silly things are just not going to crack it. But ‘soul winning’ will, because this is how God designed life to be, full of love, purpose, joy, and rejoicing.

‘Pearls, smearls . . . Give me, Jesus Christ, every time.’