Turn That Frown Upside Down

The world is in quite a state as I sit to write my reflection. There is turmoil at every turn. Violence, neglect, bullying, death, destruction is everywhere. It has been part of nearly every conversation that I have had in the past few weeks. There is so little to be said about all of this pain and suffering other than it is tragic and so hard to understand. As I asked God to guide my words to you I received the following response. Turn that frown upside down.

I thought about how simple it is to smile. We actually use fewer muscles to smile than to frown and yet it can be so hard to turn the corners of our mouths upward when faced with difficult times. In the midst of turmoil the last thing you may want to do is smile. Certainly, God could not mean that we should ignore all of the evil in the world and simply smile as though we are oblivious to the pain and suffering happening in so many lives, but the message kept coming back to my mind, turn that frown upside down. I thought about this phrase for a long time. What did it have to do with our world today, our world filled with sorrow?

And then I realized…it has everything to do with today. It had everything to do with yesterday. I will have everything to do with tomorrow. Throughout history there has been turmoil. Our ancestors endured pain and suffering. Not long ago, I teared up talking with my daughter-in-law about the heartbreak of needing to lock down schools. She reminded me there was turmoil in the world when I attended school in the late 60's and 70's and I remembered learning about the turbulent times while my grandparents were raising children in the 40's. There has always been a choice for us to be negative or positive in the midst of unrest.

Turn that frown upside down. Find joy in life. Refuse to lose hope. Refuse to lose faith. I reread the story of Job in the bible. Could there be anything worse than what he went through. Throughout his troubles he was honest with his feelings, but he never blamed God. In the end, he maintained his relationship with his God and others looked at him with admiration for his ability to trust God and even support others in their trials.

We cannot give up on the world. We cannot continue to focus on the evil in our world. The more we do the worse it gets. Bad news breeds bad news. Often it seems people try to outdo the bad news with even worse news. What a deadly spiritual spiral. What a constant frown!

You can allow yourself to be sucked into the muck of turmoil and wear a frown or you can choose to be positive and turn it upside down wearing a smile for the entire world to see. Believe me there is plenty to smile about in the world if you open your eyes and ears to it. The other day as I finished my walk I was struck by the bright purple and yellow pansy growing amongst the rocks. Talk about hope! It prompted me to smile and I felt good inside. A smile represents hope to others, as well. When you choose to smile at someone you give them hope, for their day, for their situation or even for their future. A gentle smile when someone is hurting can let them know you care about them. They experience compassion. They may even extend a smile and compassion towards others as a result of receiving yours.

No doubt, there is something infectious about a smile. It can light up a room in a moment's time. Just think what it could do for the world. Just think of the power you might have in changing someone's attitude toward a situation. All you have to do is turn that frown upside down!

Questions to ponder:
- When have I experienced being in a bad mood and having someone smile at me?
- How did it make me I feel?
- How do I feel when I smile at others?
- What is God telling me through the phrase turn that frown upside down?

May God's Peace Be With You,
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A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength.
Proverbs 17:22

Phrase of the week:
Hold your tongue