

This is the Day...Friday

October 1, 2021

It is not my Job!

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” (Galatians 6:9-10)

Over the past few years, as the self-checkout lines have become more popular in local grocery stores and big box stores, I have noticed that people have some very strong opinions, both positive and negative, regarding self-checkout. I have heard some say that self-checkout is just another indication of how far we have strayed from true customer service in the retail industry. Many take offense to the fact that they have to scan and bag their purchases. Recently in Food Lion, I saw a man attempting to checkout and the machine was not scanning properly. When he could not quickly find an employee to help him, he began shouting that he should not have to be trained to run the equipment in order to be able to shop at the store.

His frustration is understandable. The technological advances that have been made over the past decade or two are nothing short of amazing. But unfortunately, in some cases that technology has eliminated the need for direct human interaction. The result is that we have a new generation of folks who have learned to interact with each other only by electronic means. Telephone conversations have become a flurry of text messages. Human interaction has been replaced with social media and electronic messaging. Receiving kind service from a nice person working the checkout at the local store has been replaced with a cold, lifeless machine.

Recently, I was at the self-checkout station of a local big box store, scanning and bagging my purchases. As I was completing my purchase, an elderly woman rode up in one of those motorized wheelchairs with a basket on the front. I noticed that she was having a difficult time checking out. It was obviously painful for her to reach the items in her basket, move them across the scanner and get them into a bag. I also noticed two employees who were working in the self-checkout area having a personal conversation with each other. They looked over at the elderly lady several times and then turned around to continue their conversation. At one point, they appeared to even be laughing at the lady's situation.

I did not want to cause a scene or have my picture appear in the local paper the next day with the headline, “Local pastor gets arrested in store brawl.” But I could not just walk away. Then a kind young man who had also been at the self-checkout went over to help the lady. When he asked the employees why they would not help the elderly lady, they responded, “That's not our job. We just keep the machines running. She should not be using the self-checkout.” Since when does kindness come with a paycheck? Do we only help others in need if we can receive something in return? Has our technology eliminated our need to be kind to each other?

This incident was a clear reminder to me that, in this age of technology, we cannot allow ourselves to become weary of doing good. It is our job! Not because we are paid to, not because of what we may receive in return, but because it is who we are as Christians. And if we are faithful and do not give up, we will reap a great harvest.