

158. A COMMUNITY EFFORT - WEDNESDAY - SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

Good morning, Grace Harbor – it's Dan. Happy... ugh... Wednesday.

I am *beat*. Yesterday was... a long day. A hard day. But also an amazing day. Let me tell you about it.

I've been going out to help with the squash harvest at Ted and Lilly's farm. Because it had rained heavily over the weekend, everything was taking longer than normal. The process that was usually only two steps was now five – including drying each and every squash by hand with a towel. And because the rain is set to return today, we had to try to get everything done by the end of yesterday.

It was a tall task, to say the least. While we made good progress on Monday, it was clear we needed to move faster on Tuesday. The problem though is that moving faster means the likelihood of more mistakes.

If you drop a squash and bruise it, or you grab it by the stem and it breaks off, you've only got about a week to use it before it goes bad – instead of months. In fact, we had a special crate where we put any that wouldn't keep.

By the time I got there, the farm hands were already hard at work. Also out there was Mr. Rutherford. His knees can't take bending down in the dirt, so he was perched atop a crate at the end of the rows checking the squash for bruises. Whenever he'd find something concerning, he'd

shout, "We got another special!" and then place it in the crate.

One thing his knees **can** do, at least according to him, is predict the weather. He'd try to be encouraging, saying, "Keep up the pace, everyone. You're doing great." But then sometimes he'd add, "My knees say the rain is back tomorrow!" and it felt more like a warning.

I had returned to cutting and lifting again, but I was sore and tired from the day before, and I started slowing down. An hour or so in, I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was Ted. He said, "Hey, Dan, why don't you shift over to the towel work and let someone a bit fresher take a turn."

"That's ok," I said without looking up. "We're all tired. I can push through."

"Dan," he said with compassion in his voice, "you don't need to push through. Look around."

When I looked up, there were a lot more people around than when we started.

"I called a few friends to see if they could come help, and I guess word got around," Ted said. "There are at least 20 new folks who have turned up just in the last half hour. You don't need to overdo it. And I promise, it might not seem glamorous, but drying off is just as important as everything else."

I handed over my shears, and reluctantly took a rag. To be

honest, I was embarrassed. I wanted to be one of the strong ones – one of the ones who could do the *hard* job. I got to work drying, but I was definitely feeling sad.

Mid-afternoon, a new wave of volunteers showed up, which was good because we were on the home stretch. Then, I heard a familiar voice shout, “Daddy!” It was my daughter.

“How’d you get here?” I asked.

“Mom picked me and Fern up after school,” my daughter explained. “She packed me a change of clothes and said I could help while she did something.”

“What something?” I asked.

“I don’t know,” she replied. “I’m going to go find Fern.” And she skipped away.

Ten minutes later, the newest best buddies in town were back, helping me with the wiping. And can I tell you, we had the *best* time. Sure, I had to remind them not to grab the stems about 50 times, and we made our fair share of contributions to the “special” squash crate, but you could tell they really wanted to be a part of the team and were working hard.

A while later, we heard Ted’s voice booming through a bull horn. “Ok, everybody! Thank you *so* much for all of your help today! I know we didn’t quite finish, but we couldn’t

have made it this far without you. Why don't you take the next 15 minutes to wrap up what you're working on, and then head over to the barn."

When we got over there, I learned what the "something" was my wife had been working on. Laid out on long tables were donations from some of Grace Harbor's local restaurants. Burgers from The Blue Anchor, sandwiches from the Fruit of the Earth Bakery, a large bowl of salad Lilly had made from stuff grown there on the farm, piles of chocolate chip cookies from Auden and Brookie's Ice Cream & Cookies, and Bobby had even set up a hot chocolate station, which was perfect after a cool, muddy day.

As we ate, Ted said to me, "I know you weren't too keen on switching jobs earlier, but I'm glad you did. Especially once the girls got there after school, I could tell it meant a lot to them to help. So, thank you."

"Honestly," I replied, "working with them was the best part of my day."

Before we close in prayer today, I wonder if you've ever had an experience like this. You're part of a team, and there's a special way you want to help, but for whatever reason, you can't. Maybe you want to help cook dinner, but your adult says it isn't safe. Or there's a position you want to play on a team, but it's someone else's job or someone else's turn. In those moments, you have a choice to make – you can be upset, maybe even sit out, or you can find another way to help. Can you think of a time like

that? And if you can, what choice did you make?

If you need more time, you can pause the podcast, and I'll be right here when you get back.

[PAUSE]

Wednesdays are days when we practice setting our intentions, and this can be a big part of it. When we join a team or start a project, we can make our intentions very specific – I will play *this* specific role. Or, we can commit ourselves to the bigger picture – I intend to help in whatever way I'm needed. When it comes to loving with all our strength, which is our theme for the week, I think it takes a strong person to put the team or the mission first.

Ok, let's close in prayer. If you want to, you can close your eyes and fold your hands.

Dear God, sometimes we get to help in the ways we want and the ways we dream of. Other times, it doesn't work out that way. In these moments, help us to know that it's ok to be disappointed, but may we also be willing to serve where we are most needed. Amen.

Ok, Grace Harbor, have a great Wednesday, and I'll see you tomorrow.

© 2026 Defining Grace, LLC | Written by Dan Wunderlich