

The Heroes Among Us

Should you decide to catch the news, be prepared. Be prepared to be inundated with news of where a certain celebrity, bereft of moral purity, will be buried, all the while waiting for further litigation that shall determine who the father of her surviving child really is. And quickly on the heels of this story will be the latest on the icon of the young teen world who cannot decide if she will stay in rehab, shave her head or get a new tattoo. And sadly the real heroes who are laying their lives down for our freedom remain virtually unknown. Not only are they fighting the war against terrorism, they are fighting for the freedom of a people who have never lived in a democracy and do not always appreciate what is actually being done for them. These precious soldiers, marines, sailors and warriors of the air are more often than not confined to a heart-warming segment at the end of our news where they sign off with an "I love you, dear, or I love you, Mom." The cameras close out and we go on with our world while they go out to fight an enemy unlike any that Americans have ever fought. Many of them have shaved heads also, but not for spoiled attention, but to put their helmet on with a bit more ease. Today I would like to present you three types of real heroes.

1. Our National Heroes.

This past week I had lunch with one of our members, retired Lt. Col. James Cain. He has three silver stars, enough battle wounds to merit filling a wall with purple hearts. And sometimes on Sunday morning you might see him have to get up if his pastor extends his sermon, because of unbearable pain. He still suffers for the cause of freedom. Yet at any given moment in conversation, a man who has survived hand-to-hand combat will get tears in his eyes when referring to his grown children. In a day and age of unfaithfulness, he is a faithful man to a wonderful wife, Beverly. While finishing lunch, he was telling me of some escaped chickens loose in our community that he was looking for at 6:00 that morning. Jim asked me, "Pastor, would you like to go with me on a reconnaissance mission?" So I had the privilege to be Jim Cain's accompanying chaplain on a mission to search out terrorist chickens. Well, we didn't find the chickens and we were not chased by the paparazzi, but it was a privilege to be in the same truck, breathing the same air, laughing at the same things, concerned over the same issues with a patriot. Jim is the kind of man John Wayne pretended to be in the movies.

I regularly keep in contact with Tim Lee, my Marine friend who lost both legs in Viet Nam. Tim is just little older than I and as I took a morning walk today, I realized Tim will have to wait until heaven to do the same. The years are rolling by and my old friend has been walking on his hands since the early 70's. Both shoulders have been operated on because he has worn out his rotator cusp. Yet he travels around the world preaching the Gospel and seeing people converted at places like Camp Lejeune and large church auditoriums across this land. He never complains, keeps his sense of humor and although his personal mobility is restricted, he maintains a lifelong walk with God. Tim has lived up to the motto of the Marines, "Semper Fidelis," - always faithful. He has been faithful to his precious, loyal wife, Connie, his children, grandchildren, his church and above all his Master, Christ! These are just two of my heroes.

2. Our Church Heroes.

Today is Deacon's elections. Many times we joke about the traditional Pastor/Deacon relationship. In some places it is a battle, but I have to tell you in the last few years at Christchurch, the loyalty and love between pastor and deacons has been refreshing. I give thanks for the accomplishments of the board and the sweet spirit in which the business of our Lord is handled. Most of our members at Christchurch are not ordained deacons, and the love and loyalty I feel for these sheep of God's pasture is just as appreciated. Their willingness to serve with tenacity as Sunday School teachers, Awana helpers, Jr. Church preachers, assistants, puppet operators, choir members, planners and workers for Vacation Bible School and special events is beautiful.

I thank the Lord for our Women's Missionary Sorority. Even as I write these words, Cindy

Messick and our WMS President, Linda Pool are on a mission trip in India. The most often heard comment I hear from our missionaries is, "We never have anyone take more interest and do caring things for our family than the ladies of your WMS." Our ladies put together gift boxes for poor children, sponsor Christmas in July, and help make our Mission's Conference a true faith promise miracle.

One of my heroes in the church is Bernard Mowery. He is going on 20 years as a Sunday School teacher of boys. Recently he fell and seriously broke his arm requiring extensive surgery. With pain and inconvenience, he never missed his Sunday School class. So often some church members, almost with delight, look for a reason not to be in church; how I appreciate many an unsung hero that considers not fulfilling their responsibility as unthinkable. These are just a few of my heroes.

3. Our Domestic Heroes.

While taking a walk this past week, which began just before sunrise, I witnessed something that took place just as the beginning rays of sunshine were cresting the horizon. I saw a woman throwing newspapers from an old truck that sounded as though it needed a mechanical tune up. Later as I finished my walk, I witnessed well-groomed children arriving early for school. I thought about the moms and dads who have to work extra jobs just to make financial ends meet, yet you would never know by the way their kids excel that the parents are struggling. Please allow me to use some pastoral imagination as I view a mom in an old truck delivering papers. Having been a paperboy in my youth, I know the strain of getting up very early to wrap, pack and throw those papers. But allow me in the next paragraph to pay tribute to a domestic hero.

The alarm goes off at 4:00 a.m. and while her coffee is brewing, she tip toes so as not to wake her sleeping children and hard working husband, who got in late last night. She lays hold of her old Bible reads a passage, takes a few sips of coffee, puts her earphones on and listens to Nancy Lee DeMoss on the radio tell of praying for revival in our land. She gives Nancy a soft Amen as she shoves her final paper in a small plastic bag. The truck is loaded with the papers. With every toss, she whispers a prayer for each child with dotting confidence that in the early morning mist, God will hear and answer her prayer. She arrives home and to her surprise, she smells bacon. Not only has her sweetheart arisen, but also he has prepared breakfast for the kids. He says to her, "I don't have to be at work as early because of the late night; let me get the kids to school. And oh, I fixed you some breakfast. I'll be back and we'll have about 30 minutes before I have to go. I know it's not much time, but will you be my 30 minute date?" She smiles, pushes her hair away from her eyes and answers, "Sure!" He comes back with a caramel mocha coffee drink. She rebukes him for paying that kind of money for a simple beverage, but smiles as she retrieves it eagerly from his hand. And for 30 minutes she doesn't talk baby or child's talk; she looks into the eyes of the man she has chosen to love for the rest of her life. At this moment I could speculate what they will be saying, but it is their private time and we'll leave them alone. Like a director of a film, I imagine "panning the camera" and seeing family pictures on tables and walls and artwork made by little hands adorning the refrigerator. All telling us that here is a house that through God's blessing has become a home.

So as these cheap thrill seekers are making public spectacles of their valueless escapades, I choose to turn the noisy news off for awhile, put down the paper gossip of today's headlines and focus in on my domestic heroes that throw papers, get kids to school and squeeze in romance when they can. Through it all they never forget to receive their direction from God. They are the ones who make America great and help remind us to keep looking the Lord for our strength. *"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths"* (Proverbs 3:6). These are my heroes. What do you think about them? I love them! *"I will get me unto the great men (and ladies), and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their God..."* (Jeremiah 5:5).

- Pastor Pope -

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