

THE SOWER
ARTHUR (IL) CHURCH OF CHRIST
Ron Bartanen, Evangelist

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Have you visited our web site lately? (www.arthurcoc.com)

“THAT THESE SHALL NOT HAVE DIED IN VAIN”

The above quotation you will recognize as being from Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. This Memorial Day may we be reminded of our heritage and the sacrifices of human blood that have been made to assure freedom for our nation, and for others as well.

If there is anything more tragic than such sacrifices, it would be that such would be in vain. As the heirs of the array of benefits from such sacrifices, what does it say of us if we take these casually, even recklessly putting them at risk? Would we dare make vain such cherished blessings as our right to free speech and freedom to both practice and proclaim our faith by yielding to political correctness? Though we be inappropriately branded as “haters,” “racists,” “homophobes,” “Islamaphobes”, etc., for standing firm on the word of God in a world estranged from God, dare we despise the godly principles for which many have willingly shed their life’s blood?

Every Sunday is a Memorial Day for the Arthur Church of Christ, as we remember the sacrifice of our Lord upon the cross. Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, consisting of unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, emblematic of His body and blood, saying, “This do in remembrance of me” (1 Corinthians 11:24-25), which the early church did upon the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Such assemblies of Christians “proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26)—a message declaring He did not die in vain, but that “Christ was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25).

Jesus made the supreme sacrifice for the redemption of man, having “tasted death for every man” (Hebrews 2:9-20). Sadly, for some, in rejecting His sacrifice, His death has been in vain. How tragic! What greater offense could there be than to despise and reject the grace of God in Christ? To be assured of our standing with God, may all, in faith, be submissive to His will for their lives, openly repenting of sins, confessing Christ, and being baptized (immersed) into Christ (cf. Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Romans 10:10; 6:3-4). And may those of us who have so committed

our lives to Him “not be of them who draw back unto perdition: but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:39). May it never be said that for you He died in vain.
–Ron

HAVE A HAPPY AND SAFE MEMORIAL DAY

APARABLE OF THE AXE

Once upon a time there was a strong and energetic young man who asked for a job from a timber merchant, and he got it. The pay and work conditions were very good, so the young man was determined to do his very best. His boss gave him an axe and showed him the area in the forest where he was to work.

The first day the young man cut down 18 trees. His boss was extremely impressed, and said, “Well done. Keep it up. You are our best woodcutter yet’ Motivated by his boss’s words, the young man tried even harder the next day, but he only cut down 15 trees. The third day he tried even harder and cut down 10 trees.

Day after day the young man cut down fewer and fewer trees. His boss came to him and told him if he didn’t cut down more trees each day he would lose his job. The young man needed the job, so he tried harder and harder. He worked during his lunch breaks, but still he couldn’t cut down more trees. “*I must be losing my strength,*” the young man thought to himself. He worked overtime, but still it wasn’t enough.

Eventually his boss came to him and told him he was fired. The wood-chopping young man was very upset, but he knew he had worked as hard as he could, and just did not have enough time to chop more trees. He sadly handed his axe back.

The boss took one look at the axe and asked, “When was the last time you sharpened your axe?”

“Sharpen my axe?” the young man replied, “I have never sharpened my axe. I’ve been too busy trying to cut down enough trees.”

My dad told this story often in his ministry as a reminder to always spend time studying the word of God to *sharpen our axe*. The Bible is our tool in sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. When was the last time you sharpened your axe? --Dave Grant, Escanaba, MI Bulletin

(In line with the previous article, I believe it was Abraham Lincoln who said something to the affect: “If I have two hours in which to cut down a tree, I’ll spend one hour sharpening my axe.” Every Christian needs to spend time in the prayerful reading, studying and meditating upon the word of God. Our effectiveness as laborers for Christ depends upon it. –Ron)

SUCCESS?

If success means having lots of money, would we consider Jesus a success? At the end of his short life all he had were the clothes on his back – and those were taken by his enemies.

If success means having a family (children and a spouse, where would be the apostle Paul? First Corinthians 9:5 indicates that Paul gave up his right to marry for the sake of preaching the gospel.

If success means having a good reputation where would the prophet Jeremiah be? He was arrested, left to die in a pit of mire, taken off into captivity. He spent his entire life preaching and very seldom did he ever convince anyone to do what was right.

And yet, in the eyes of the Christian religion, these three men are considered successes. But more important than that, they are considered successes by God!

The real definition of success is to fulfill God’s will for your life! “He who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John-2:17b). --Larry Fitzgerald, Abilene, TX, via *Bulletin Gold*

THE SERMON SERIES, “EXODUS—MESSAGE OF DELIVERANCE” continues today as we consider the Jewish Passover, and its application to us in the Christian age. The reading will be Exodus 12:7-8, 11-14.

PRAYER UPDATE: I am to have additional laser eye-surgery Friday morning. *** Doris is doing much better following her recent fall.