

“Be a Martyr”

Mark 6:14-29

Last Sunday, as I was leaving for the Central Illinois District Convention in Springfield, Malinda asked me if I could leave her some cash, for emergencies, since I would be gone until Tuesday. So I took the \$27 out of my wallet, put it on the dresser, (it could not be a big emergency) and said I would stop at the ATM on my way out of town, which I was going to do anyway. When I travel, I always like to have a little more cash than usual – just in case.

So I packed up, stopped by the office to get a few things for the convention, and I left for Springfield – without stopping at the ATM. I realized this about the time I hit Barry. But, I knew that most of my meals were provided at the convention, and most every place takes credit cards, so the only disturbance to my schedule (if I didn't want to pay ATM fees) is that I did not get a Diet Coke at Jacksonville – I think that was a first.

I stop and eat in Springfield, pay with a credit card, check into the hotel, get dressed for the opening worship service, and follow Pastor Troxel's car all the way to Sherman where we would be worshipping. All is well, President Matthew Harrison is preaching, and then it is time to gather the offering.

I have nothing to give. I thought about the HyVee SCRIP card with a few dollars on it, but chose not to go that route. (Glad I didn't, because I used it the other day and it only had \$.26 left on it.) As the plate passed by, I was disturbed by the situation, and then I became even more disturbed. "What a self-centered fool I was." I was disturbed, not because I was unprepared to return thanks to God through my offering, oh no, I was disturbed because everyone around me clearly saw that I put nothing in the plate.

I acted like King Herod. He was more concerned with the opinions of the people around him than he was concerned with the things of God. I was much more concerned about what my brother pastors thought of me than I was of anything concerning God. "What a self-centered fool I was." If anything bothered me, it should have been that I allowed myself to be unprepared to serve the Lord when given the opportunity.

Opportunities to serve the Lord manifest themselves in very different ways. Some people serve as pastors; there are teachers, musicians, those who work behind the scenes, those who pray.

We are blessed this weekend to host the Federwitz family who have been given a different opportunity to serve – as Bible translators in Papua, New Guinea. I will let Jonathan, Carrie, and the kids tell you all the many "hats" they wear. But of all the terms used to describe them: translator, missionary, pilot, father, mother, the list goes on and on – one term that you would not plan on using is "martyr".

If I ask you, what is a martyr? Most everyone would say, “One who died for their faith.” But the word comes from the Latin word “martyria”, which means “witness”. President Harrison spoke of this at the convention. A martyr is someone who is so convinced of the truth of God’s Word, who has been molded and shaped by the Word of God in such a way that, you cannot hold it in; you must confess; you must bear witness of this truth – even if that means putting yourself in harm’s way. That is a martyr. Be a martyr. Be a witness that what we have is the truth and don’t worry or be disturbed about what the other people around you are thinking.

Be a martyr. It takes someone who is absolutely convinced of the truth of God’s Word to fly an airplane into the jungles of Papua, New Guinea. These are not smooth and pristine runways.

But, you know, it takes someone who is absolutely convinced of the truth of God’s Word to go into the homes of your friends, neighbors, or loved ones and share words concerning the guilt of their sin and their absolute need for the forgiveness which is only found in Christ. That is not a smooth or pristine runway either. Be a martyr. Be a witness.

Don’t be a self-centered fool like I was on Sunday and be concerned with what other people are thinking about you in regard to the things of God. If we preach ourselves, the Word of God will never be heard. It is Christ, and Him crucified, that we must confess and proclaim. Only then is guilt taken away. Only then is sin covered. We

must stand in opposition to the sinful world and be absolutely convinced of the truth.

The missionaries in New Guinea don't go around preaching a message saying "Our life in Christ is not much different than what you have known before. It is an easy transition." No, it is life altering. It is new life. It is coming from death to life.

John the Baptist was a martyr. But you probably knew that before you came to church today. The story of how Herod's wife arranged to have John beheaded has been told many times. But John was a martyr long before he lost his head.

A martyr is someone who is so convinced of the truth of God's Word, (John proclaimed "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"); a martyr is one who has been molded and shaped by the Word of God in such a way that, you cannot hold it in; you must confess; you must bear witness of this truth – even if your listeners are hostile, even if this means putting yourself in harm's way. That is the life of a martyr. The path is not smooth or pristine. Be a martyr. Amen.