



feeding...gathering...carrying...leading. (Isiah 40:11)

Dear family,

The Book of Hebrews, the substance of Bo's present series, has a well-known Memorial passage. Chapter 11 is an illustrious roll of honor for deceased heroes of the fight of faith, including many of the great patriarchs and leaders – all among the soldiery in the Faith Hall of Fame. The fact is that Memorials, most of them anyway, celebrate well-known events or well-known people. Our city is full of such: The Lincoln, The Jefferson, The FDR, the Veterans of the Vietnam and Korean Wars, The Washington Monument. But we have another Memorial in the Arlington Cemetery, whose history is rooted in the grave of a British soldier who died on the Western Front in WW1. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster Abbey and at the Arc de Triomphe became the precursors of such tombs in so many nations. The one in Arlington was established by an Act of Congress in 1921, and is called 'The Tomb of the Unknowns'. Written on it are these words: "Here rests an American soldier known but to God."

This Memorial Day weekend, we looked at the closing verses of Hebrews 11: 35-40 and read words like these: "women ... others ... some ... still others ... they ... these ... them..." The people referred to by these general designations were equally worthy of memorializing, but we just don't know who they are. They are nameless, and they appear on the pages of scripture unknown, and unknowingly. But in some strange way, more than the heroes, they speak in a relatable way to our own unpublicized lives. For every memorial to a well-known hero of faith, there are thousands of unknown and unidentified faithful, and that counts us in to be members of the Faith Hall of Fame too. Paul understood this. "Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth" (1 Corinthians 1:26). But the fact is that "He chose the lowly ... the despised ... the things that are not."

When you read scripture, be on the look out for these kind of unknowns. On Sunday, I referred in more detail to several of them just from the Gospel records, who fought the good fight of pure faith. There was:

- the little guy in John 2 who served the miraculous wine to the master of the wedding feast;
- the guys in Mark 2:3-5 who tested the homeowner's house insurance policy and lowered their friend through the roof;
- the unknown boy with the now well-known lunch in John 6: 5-10;
- the nameless, penniless widow in Mark 12:43 who is mentioned just every time anyone teaches about a Christian view of giving and stuff;
- the leper, Samaritan, foreigner in Luke 17:15 who should never have been known by anyone;
- the guys called "they" and "them" in John 11:41, who engaged the corpse of Lazarus by ignoring all the religious prohibitions, all the social and aesthetic protestations about bad odors, all the argumentations of natural reason that denied that dead men can live again;
- the unknown, outcast, untouchable woman in Mark 5:24-34 who ends up being renamed a "daughter", an intimate because of her faith;
- the "guy with a water jar" and "guy with a house" who seemed to have been prepared for that strategic moment in Holy week when they facilitated the Last Supper no less and

were simply at the right place at the right time for Jesus, despite appearing to be happenstance bit players, walk on's, extras.

A bunch of nameless and unknown men and women were faithful and obedient and they are memorialized in scripture, the ultimate Book of Remembrance, and are memorialized today as you read this!

Like those nameless characters in the gospels, all of whom had nothing whereby to commend themselves, we come too – unknown. The gospel unknowns did not have the resources to commend themselves: they had no wine, no food, no legs, no money, no skin, no breath, no future, no hope. They had no leverage and they had no resources to buy in. But everyone of them ended up having an encounter with Jesus, and discovering that he had taken care of everything including the cost. They just arrived at His feet, put all they had into His hand, just simply trusted Him and obeyed what He spoke to them against the rational odds. Yes, they were on the fringe but they found out that touching the fringe of His garment and His life was enough. And despite the fact that their faith was unformed and uninformed, fragile and imperfect and even immature, the saving, healing grace of Jesus transformed them, and they were all memorialized, joining the roll call of Hebrews 11:39 – the myriads of unknowns who have found a place in God's Faith Hall of Fame, not because they were voted in there by man's approval, but planted there because of God's personal remembrance of their faith and works of faith.

We are unknowns and there are plenty of reasons for us not to be included in the company of the faithful in the Faith Hall of Fame. No one is planning a memorial for us, or even writing about us in a book of remembrance. Our grave stones will mark the resting place of unknowns, but in the words of the Arlington Tomb, "known but to God." We choose to be remembrancers of the Lord in our worship as we remember His works and His ways and His wonders; as we kneel at the altar and receive the eucharist; as we remember the way He has led us, as we recall the meanings of what He has done, and inventory afresh the requirements these memories make of us. But we are also provoking a remembrance of God through our lives and testimonies, making memorials like Cornelius (Acts 10), through our prayers and our generosity. We're not just being memorials but making memorials.

There was one Memorial on the Mall I did not mention at the beginning. Did you notice it? It is the Martin Luther King Memorial, commemorating the death of a soldier in a battle for the image of God in all men. Would it ever be possible to imagine or believe that there could be sufficient memorials of prayer and giving that would attract God's attention and invite His intervention to build a memorial as He did in Caesarea, to the breaking of the bondages of our racially rooted irreconciliations by the power of the same gospel?

Though you are unknown to the world at large, your prayers and your obedient works of faith, your daily trust in the Lord, your entrustment of your loaves and fishes assets into His hands, your gifts to the poor – all of these are a memorial offering and like Cornelius, you are thereby known to God and memorialized by Him. In the fight of faith, waging our warfare, armed and armored, we may live and die unknown by men – like those in Hebrews, we are the nameless others, the "these" and the "them", but in the words of the Tomb to the unknowns, "known to God." And may reconciliation be His reward to us as it was to Peter and Cornelius.

Pastorally yours,
Stuart