

Mark 9:30-37    18th Sunday after Pentecost    September 22, 1991

*30They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; 31for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." 32But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.*

*33Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" 34But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. 35He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." 36Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 37"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."*

Colossians 3:3-4: *For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, your life, appears, then you too will appear with him in glory.*

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It has been more than eleven years now since my Father died; my mother died a year earlier. Their obituary notices were about the only time I remember seeing their names in the paper. Back when I was in high school, my picture was in the paper fairly often, for sports, academic honors – one day my picture was on the front page of the Sandusky Register, and in the Lorain Journal for winning a scholarship. That day I knew that I was the most important person ever to come from our family.

By now, I'm about the only person in the world who remembers any of that, or cares. But in the last year, two people have talked to me, one about my father - the other about my mother.

First there was Ann Neate. She was sitting across from me at the 50th anniversary celebration for my Uncle Art and Aunt Wilma.

"How are your children doing," I asked her. She told me of her son who had just moved to Seattle. "The first thing he did when he got there was look for a church," she said. "Lynn, I don't know if you are aware of what your mother did for my son. He was sick in bed for months, and she faithfully visited him. Even now he often speaks of her. She was his Sunday School teacher."

A few weeks ago I was at my 25th class reunion. Eight of us were at the table, talking about our life back then, things now. Dennis Weilnau, Erie County Extension Agent, said to me, "Lynn, do you know all your father did for the Kelley's Island 4-H Camp? He donated the

first camp tractor, he and his brothers loaned the money to buy the land for the camp. In the early days of the camp he worked there many weekends.” I didn't know most of what Dennis told me, my father seldom spoke of what he did.

Were my parents that unusual? Or are there stories to be told of you also? Have you given and served in places and ways that most of the world never sees? No pictures in the paper, no banquets given in your honor.

God. Who else really knows what you give, the difference that you make? *Your life is hidden with Christ in God.*

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What God sees, and clings to and treasures in us are not the honors that we win for ourselves, newspaper clippings, or raises and promotions that we earn. For first with God are the servants. First with God are those who “waste” their time on children, teaching children, noticing children, talking with children. First with God are those who give their lives for the good of all. First with God are those who in quiet ways and in quiet places freely give themselves - for they are like Jesus.

Not a single history book of Jesus day mentions him. The death he died on Calvary was hidden from all but a few. Yet he gave his life in faith that his dying was the serving of us all. Though his disciples could not understand why Jesus should die, he walked the lonely road to Calvary confident that what would make little sense on earth would be celebrated in heaven. Shame here, glory there, dishonor here, honor there, death here, life forever there.

*For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, your life, appears, then you shall appear with him in glory.*

A woman takes time to visit a sick child, a man to work to build a camp for children, few see, give notice but they trust that God will not forget.

Many years ago I sat in a room, behind the desk sat one of my professors. He was helping me to remember my life, to understand. On that particular day came a moment I will

never forget. I was overcome by a tremendous sadness, I began to cry uncontrollably, "I never had a father," I blurted out. I had been talking about what I had missed, a father to take me fishing, to be with me man to man. He was always too busy, too many meetings, too much work.

There is a cost to our serving, our giving. Each day only has so many hours, each family only so many dollars. What is given away for others cannot be kept for self. A 4-H camp was blessed; a son felt he was robbed. Only God who knows both father and son better than they know themselves can judge.

Each of you faces the same dilemma that my father faced. The need for what you can give is beyond counting, but you are limited. What you give for one will be kept from another. You do your best to decide but who knows what is best? Only God - only God can judge.

And this is God's judgement: to give God's son for you - to forgive you all your sins, to promise you that when Christ appears that you will appear with him in glory. Christ is God's gift to you, freely given, joyfully given.

And your life? God hopes that your life will be your gift to his world, freely given, joyfully given in service.

What stories will be told of you ten years after you have died?

Stories of your loving faithfulness?

Stories of your work and support?

Stories of what only God and one or two more ever saw?

*Your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, your life, appears, then you shall appear with him in glory.*

Finally, this promise is all that matters. My father's giving for to a 4-H camp will not save him, nor will his failures to be everything a son wanted from a father damn him - in Christ, and in Christ alone is his life.

You and I daily must choose. Hungry people, retirement, the church, our children's college education all compete for our money, the needs of children the demands of the Sunday School, work, our community, the lonely, our neighbors all compete for our time. Give to one and in that moment you cannot be there for another. To be human is to be limited, and to be forced to choose. In Christ God frees us to do just that, for the weight of our eternity is not on

our shoulders, but borne on the cross of God's son. We are free to give, to serve, to love, knowing that when Christ, our Life appears, we shall appear with him in glory.

Thanks be to God.