

Pastor Bill Sass – Sermon for Sunday, April 25, 2021

ONE FOR ALL

John 10: 11-18

When the Revolutionary War ended, a number of colonists loyal to England remained in America in small clusters. The hostility between the Loyalists, and other colonists, was great. A group of Loyalists from Manhattan raided Toms River, N.J., and burned the town. Shortly after that, Philip White, a Loyalist, slipped back into New Jersey to visit his wife. He was captured by the New Jersey militia, but shot while trying to escape. Rumors about the event built.

Manhattan Loyalists rowed out to the British prison ship Britannia, and convinced the commander to hand over one of the colonists, Joshua Huddy, for a supposed prisoner exchange. The Loyalists then took Huddy out and hanged him, in revenge for what they called the murder of Philip White.

The American people were outraged! A large group from Huddy's funeral wrote to George Washington, demanding that he do something, or they themselves would. Washington was aware things were on the verge of mob justice, and realized something must be done.

Washington first wrote the British commander in the area, and asked that he hand over the guilty party. The British commander stalled.

Washington next consulted Congress with his unhappy secondary plan, it involved executing one British prisoner, drawn by lot, to pay for the hanged Huddy, and appease the people. Congress agreed with the plan, and a prisoner was chosen by lottery to die. His name was Captain Charles Asgill.

Since the British still would not hand over the guilty murderer, it looked as if Charles Asgill would be executed. The Americans though, were reluctant to end the life of the likable youth for a crime he did not commit. On the other hand, the populace demanded retribution for Huddy. His release would likely start a return to mob justice against the Loyalists.

As Congress debated the issue, the French stepped in and begged for Asgill's life, reminding the colonists of the debt they owed for French assistance in the recent war. The Americans took this convenient way out, and released Asgill.

The issues of justice were difficult, even laying aside the whole problem of appeasing the populace, Joshua Huddy had been murdered. However, the American government could not rightly execute just anyone for the crime. Despite politics, punishment was due the murderer, and only the murderer. There would be no justice in making an unwilling man sacrifice for the absent murderer. It is a fascinating case out of our history. One man to be sacrificed to satisfy the guilt of another.

There is a case in history however, when an innocent man willingly gave his life for the guilty. Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for His sheep." The Lord of all life willingly lays down His life for us all.

WE APPLAUD WHEN A MAN OR WOMAN GIVES HIS OR HER LIFE FOR ANOTHER. Such instances do come along from time to time. Murfreesboro, Tennessee, May 28, 1989. Former NFL football player Jerry Anderson died after pulling two young boys out of a rain-swollen river about 40 miles southeast of Nashville. Witnesses said Anderson saw two boys, thought to be 11 or 12 years old, attempting to cross a dam spanning the river. One or both boys fell into the water.

According to officer Bill Todd, "Mr. Anderson jumped in the water and managed to get the little boys out, but witnesses said he went under two or three times, and about the fourth time, he didn't come back up." He gave his life to rescue two small boys.

Of course, you don't have to be an American, or football player, for such heroic actions. In a Middle school in the Ukrainian village of Ivanichi, a young teacher died sometime back. He absorbed the blast of a hand grenade to protect his pupils.

What was a grenade doing in a middle school? According to the London *TIMES*, the teacher, a graduate of the KGB border-guard college, had been delivering military instruction that was a compulsory part of the curriculum for Soviet children. He was teaching them how to handle what should have been an unarmed grenade. When he pulled the pin, a wisp of smoke showed that a live grenade had become mixed in with demonstration grenades, and he gave his life.

You don't have to be a man to perform such heroics. Many years ago, a woman carrying a baby through the hills of south Wales, England, was overtaken by a

blizzard. Searchers found her later, frozen to death in the snow. Amazed that she had on no other garments, they searched further and found her baby. She had wrapped them around the child, who was still alive and well. He grew up to be David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of Great Britain in World War I.

No greater love than this, that we lay down our life for another. We applaud such bravery, selflessness, and willingness to sacrifice one's life for another.

This is what this passage from John's Gospel teaches us. Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for His sheep."

I did hear about a man who acted drastically on behalf of his dog. He was on a boat returning from a Caribbean cruise. On deck, a boy was playing with the man's dog, throwing a stick for the dog to retrieve. One toss went too far, and went over the rail into the sea. The dog jumped overboard after it. In distress, the dog's owner begged the captain to turn the ship around and rescue the dog. "Stop the ship for a dog! I can't do that," said the captain. "Then you will stop it for a man!" shouted the dog's owner, as he jumped overboard. Of course, the ship stopped, and both man and dog were rescued. The point here is that the man knew the ship would stop. He was not really sacrificing his life for his dog.

But, the Lord of all the universe lay down His life for you and me. He lay aside His regal robes, to take up the cross of degradation and death. He lay aside His crown of glory for a painful crown of thorns, and did it for you and me. Can you get your mind around such an astounding truth? Are you worthy of such an act? I certainly am not.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for His sheep." I know I'm a sinner. I am unworthy of having the Lord of Life sacrifice Himself in my behalf. Rather, I should be sacrificing myself for Him. Today's not too late to start. By His grace, I will dedicate the rest of my life to Him. I hope you will, too.

AMEN!!

"S.D.G