

Precious and Death

John Lee

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints” (Psalm 116:15).

An exercise used in school is to be given two words and put them together in a simple sentence. But only God could allow the words “precious” and “death” to be truly put together. We would more likely say, “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the LIFE of His saints.” But for God, it is their death.

When a death of a saint occurs, many of our lives will never be the same -- nor should they. Life goes on with little thought when we lose a trinket, but when we lose a treasure, things are changed. This summer, we lost a treasure.

All of us have special people who have made a great impact on our lives. For many of us, Marvin Ingle was such a one. This summer, he went to his reward, but he lives in our hearts until we meet again. Marvin was a pillar in the Lord’s church, serving as an elder, then as an evangelist in Iowa and Indiana. Countless people learned of the gospel through his teaching and were brought to the Lord.

In a time when the opportunity for higher education was unavailable or shunned by many, Marvin persisted and ultimately earned his Ph.D. in Education. And yet, he never let his education dampen his common sense. Doctor Ingle always remained Marvin, a unique blend of deep and yet simple, content and yet restless, firm, but loving.

In **Acts 13:36**, we find this about David: *“For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.”* So it could be said of Marvin. He served his generation by the will of God.

How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things! (Romans 10:14-15).

Sometimes we may use overly grandiose words for those we love and share our walk with. Words such as “awesome and great” might best be reserved for our God Himself. But in God’s vocabulary, maybe the word “good” would apply well to Marvin as it was applied to Barnabas. Good enough to sometimes tell what we needed to hear in his blunt way rather than what we might want to hear. Faithful, loving, and steadfast also fit the life of Marvin Ingle.

We often think of losing a fellow soldier when death takes them from us, but this is not right. When something is lost, we don’t know where it is. But now, we have the faith of knowing where Marvin is. This is not a parting but an arrival. This is a prelude to the grand reunion.

“One generation passes away, and another generation comes” (Ecclesiastes 1:4). And as such, mantles are dropped at our feet. Mantles of responsibility and service in the church, home, and to the lost. Mantles Marvin has left, which we now must pick up and carry on. This occurs with the passing of each of God’s saints. As Elijah left, Elisha carried on. And so it must be today. The work is somewhat like a relay with the baton being passed from generation to generation. Lord grant us a double portion of his spirit as we continue the race.

David had it right:

And he said, “While the child was alive, I fasted and wept; for I said, ‘Who can tell whether the LORD will be gracious to me, that the child may live?’ But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:22-23).

With each passing saint, our desire to join them in the presence of God should grow stronger and stronger. The Greek word “koimeterion” meant “a sleeping place,” and it became the name of the place where Christians would bury their beloved. It is the word we now get “cemetery” from.

As I began writing this article, I intended to honor Marvin, and so I do. But as I began putting words to paper, I felt a greater need to try and capture what Marvin would want me to say. I think he would not have wanted another grand eulogy as much as encouragement for those of us left behind. When I asked Donna what she thought, she said, “ I think that’s what Marvin would want.” So I submit it with love and adoration to a man we love, who performed our wedding service and started our lives together 48 years ago.

I close with these words from William Cullen Bryant’s classic work, *Thanatopsis*:

So live, that when thy summons comes to join

The innumerable caravan, which moves

To that mysterious realm, where each shall take

His chamber in the silent halls of death,

Thou go not, like the quarry slave at night,

Scourged to his dungeon but sustained and soothed

By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave,

Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch

About him, and lies down to pleasant dreams.

Thank you, Marvin, till we meet again.