

The Road Less Traveled – July 7, 2017

A few weeks back I shared with the kids during Children's Time something that is very special to me. As I showed the little book to them and explained what it was, it took me back to the day I received it. About 10 years ago I was visiting my grandparents, and as I was getting ready to leave, my grandfather called me into the little study off of their living room to tell me that he had something to give me. He pulled out a worn freezer bag and handed it to me. I opened the bag and pulled out a small, worn New Testament. My grandfather was a man of few words, so he simply mumbled something about wanting me to have it. I carefully examined the water-stained cover and thumbed through the brittle pages, landing finally on the presentation page at the front of the book. It was given to my grandfather on Nov. 29, 1943, by an Army chaplain. Between the date and the presenter, it finally hit me what my grandfather was giving me.

It was the Bible he read during World War II.

It's funny because he has never really talked about the war. In fact, I sometimes have to remind myself that my grandfather was a part of it because I can't remember a time when he even broached the topic. I remember seeing somewhere a picture of him in a uniform, but that's about it. Needless to say, this is an heirloom that I treasure. I took the small Bible home and placed it on my dresser as I tried to decide how best to display it safely. While it was there, I found myself picking it up and thumbing through it each night as I emptied my pockets on the way to the shower. Each time I did I would remember the other old Bible I own, the one my great-grandmother gave to my great-grandfather, who incidentally was the first Methodist in my family. That Bible sits on a stand in my office, open to Matthew's story of the Transfiguration.

Both of these books are priceless to me. They are tiny pieces of my family's history that will live on into eternity. But there is something else special about them as well. As my grandfather and great-grandfather held and read and studied these books, God spoke to them. The God who created them became a living, breathing presence in their lives. And whether it was on the battlefields of Europe or in the living room of that tiny house in downtown Houston, God was injected into their lives each time they opened the cover. They turned to those books in times of joy and sorrow, in times of victory and in times of despair. And whenever they did, I suspect they found God.

I think that's what makes them so special. Not just that they are old or that they belonged to someone I loved and who loved me. But they are tangible reminders of the power of Scripture. It has been nearly three-quarters of a century since my grandfather used that little New Testament, but I find myself reading a passage and wondering if he ever read those particular verses.

I never asked him about it. In fact, after he gave it to me, we never spoke of the little Bible again. But it doesn't matter. I don't know what questions drove him to those pages, but I know what the answer was. It's the same one I get when I read their Bibles ... and when I read mine.

*You are my beloved child. With you I am well pleased.
I strongly suspect you will find the same message in yours.*

See you Sunday.