
ARCHERY HUNTER

I surveyed the young man who had just entered the garage I was working in. He was a typical figure on any construction site with scuffed work boots, faded jeans, a muscle T-shirt, and baseball cap. As he neared the ladder I was working from, something caught my eye. On one suntanned shoulder he had a small tattoo. Looking more closely I made out the figure of a large buck and between his antlers were the words "Archery Hunter". The rattle of my impact wrench made conversation nearly impossible, so I merely smiled and nodded as he passed. We exchanged no words, however an impression was made. This young man was passionate about archery hunting. It is safe to guess that he planned to spend time in a tree stand come the first weekend in October. I'm sure, had I taken the time to ask, he would have been able to tell many stories of hunts gone by.

As I went about my work, I continued to reflect on the passing encounter with my archery hunting friend. I too enjoy archery hunting. Would I tattoo "Archery Hunter" on my shoulder? Of course not. I've been taught all the reasons why we don't inject ink into our bodies. But another question kept niggling at my mind. Does a world looking on see a person who is equally passionate about hunting even though I'm minus the tattoo? Do they find my plans in the fall months centering on time spent afield? Do hunting stories fill my thoughts and conversations? Does a God who knows my thoughts and motives see "Archery Hunter" stamped on my heart? These are important questions, for someone who calls himself a child of God, to wrestle with. What does God want from his people?

If you study your Bible you will find one recurring theme that surfaces again and again from cover to cover. The people of God are expected to love God with all their heart. In Deuteronomy Moses repeatedly calls the children of Israel to this standard. In the Gospels Jesus makes this a central point in His teaching. When asked what the greatest commandment was he answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). The book of revelation describes a group of people who love and worship God while gathered around His throne. God is a jealous God. He will never take second place in our life. He will not accept being crowded into the background by a pastime or hobby that fills more and more of my time and devotion.

There is another New Testament truth that we find for the people of God. God is looking for his people, the church, to show forth as the body of Christ the virtues of Jesus Christ himself. I Peter 2:9 says, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." In this verse the word "peculiar" could be replaced with the word "purchased."

As Christians we understand that we are bought by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Outside of Jesus Christ we find ourselves estranged from a creator God and destined for eternal destruction. But because of the wonderful work of Christ in laying down his life as a sacrifice for sin, we are able to be reconciled back to the God who made us. Why? So that we can show forth the praises, or virtues, of Him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. What a calling! I am expected to demonstrate to a lost world the virtues of the one who saved me. My dealings with mankind, like His, must be full of grace and truth.

Somehow a passionate pursuit of a pastime or hobby seems somewhat trite when held up next to this clear commission of the child of God.

There is something that can be “tattooed” on my heart. 2 Corinthians 3:2-3 says, “Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.” The Spirit of God wants to take the New Testament teachings of Christ and write them on my heart. He wants them to be something that is inside me controlling my thoughts, motives, and actions. He wants to continue to work in and through me until the world looking on is able to understand the will of God for His people by observing my life. It is done through the power of the resurrection, the prompting of the Spirit, and committed discipleship on my part. Every other pursuit in life falls second to this calling on my life. The songwriter said it well when he penned those words, “O to be like Thee! O to be like Thee! blessed Redeemer pure as Thou art; come in thy sweetness, come in Thy fullness; stamp Thine own image deep on my heart.”

There is a right time and place for enjoying pastimes. But in every season, the people of God are called to love Him with their whole heart, soul, and mind. Let us always remember that the price of our redemption was the precious blood of Christ. And in an age when society around us is trying to remove God from their consciousness, and the church is letting its light grow dim; let us be a people who have the teachings of Christ etched on our hearts so that anyone who cares to observe can see the liberating law of Christ lived out in me.

~Brendon Martin