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OUR HERO JESUS

"Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him," (Is. 53:1-3). As we think and meditate on the concept of Jesus as the hero of our spiritual family today, I want to draw our attention to the heroic aspects of His life which we all can strive to emulate in our service towards Him. While it is certainly fitting to deem as acts of heroism having the strength to do what no one else could

possibly do, such as living a perfect sinless life, dying as a sacrifice for sin, and mediating between sinners and God to reconcile them together, it is just as heroic to act and speak in such a way that we are all capable of, yet often fail to do so. I find it incredibly heroic of Jesus when He comes to the defense of those whom we know we should defend as well, and yet often fail to because of a simple lack of courage. When I think of Jesus speaking up for and defending those whom no one else would, I find myself bowing down in awe to the ultimate hero of the defenseless. *"They said to Him, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?' They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for*

accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her,''' (Jn. 8:4-7). While Jesus never condones her sin or defends her actions, "From now on sin no more," (Jn. 8:11), He does heroically stand in defense against the vicious spirit of merciless judgmental condemnation with His reassurance that He is seeking to save the lost and forgive them. "But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them,''' (Lk. 9:53-56). How desperately are heroes needed today to stand in defense of those whose shortcomings and weaknesses have left them prone to the vicious stones of poisonous words hurled through the gossip circles of our own brethren. When the weak are subject to

the injustices of others, heroic bravery is needed to come to their defense, as Jesus did for the woman attacked for being healed on a Sabbath day. "But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the crowd in response, 'There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day.' But the Lord answered him and said, 'You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?'' (Lk. 13:14-17). Jesus is not just a hero for doing the impossible, but for also doing what each and every one of us should always do, but sadly, often fail to. I quote the great line from the song "My Hero, Zero" from Schoolhouse Rock: "A hero can be a very big dog who comes to your rescue, or a very little boy who's smart enough to know what to do." The heroism of Jesus in standing up for those who were often unfairly attacked is not merely something for us to be in awe of

with jaws dropped open in a state of stunned frozen incredulity, but to be emulated in our very lives as well. *"It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master,"* (Mt. 10:25).

Jesus our hero calls upon us to be heroes as well for the weak and mistreated. He needs us to stand up for those whose sinful tendencies overshadow their honest seeking hearts. *"'Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?' And hearing this, Jesus said to them, 'It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners,'"* (Mk. 2:16-17).

"When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, 'He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.'...And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost,'" (Lk. 19:7,9-10). – D. Ruegg

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,

Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch,

If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,

If all men count with you, but

none too much;

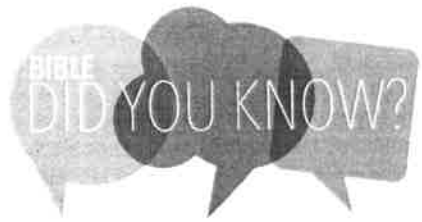
If you can fill the unforgiving minute

With sixty seconds' worth of distance run –

Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,

And – which is more – you'll be a Man my son!

(Rudyard Kipling)



"A man who hardens his neck after much reproof will suddenly be broken beyond remedy. When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when a wicked man rules, people groan. A man who loves wisdom makes his father glad. But he who keeps company with harlots wastes his wealth. The king gives stability to the land by justice, but a man who takes bribes overthrows it. A man who flatters his neighbor is spreading a net for his steps. By transgression an evil man is ensnared, but the righteous sings and rejoices."

Prov. 29:1-6



MONTHLY CHALLENGE

DIRECTIONS: Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.

1) Praying For Others Challenge

James 5:16 *"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."* Prayer can turn night into day, and can change the worst of circumstances into amazing blessings. There are so many areas where our prayers can make a difference. We can pray for one another. "Epaphras, who is one of your number, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, sends you his greetings, always laboring earnestly for you in his prayers, that you may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God," Col. 4:12. We can pray for our enemies. "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you," Matt. 5:44. We can pray for those we wish to share the gospel with. "Praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word," Col. 4:3. There are so many areas where prayer is the difference maker. Devote this month to praying diligently in these specific areas and watch God clear pathways to make progress. "I will even make a roadway in the wilderness, rivers in the desert," Is. 43:19.

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Isaiah 6:1-8

"In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.' Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth with it and said, 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.' Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and whom will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"