

Greetings to all the Saints at Manatee Life,

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 10:39 (MSG) – Larger reading: Matthew 10:32-42

“If your first concern is to look after yourself, you’ll never find yourself. But if you forget about yourself and look to me, you’ll find both yourself and me.”

STORY as shared by William Barclay:

Somewhere, late in the fourth century, there was in the East a monk called Telemachus. He had determined to leave the world and to live all alone in prayer and meditation and fasting, and so to save his soul. So in his lonely life he sought nothing but contact with God. But somehow he felt that there was something wrong. One day he rose from his knees and it suddenly dawned upon him that this life that he was living was based, not on a selfless, but on a selfish love of God. It came to him that if he was to serve God he must serve men, that the desert was no place for a Christian to live, that the cities were full of men and women; that the cities were full of sin and therefore full of need. So he determined to bid farewell to the desert and to set out to the greatest city in the world, the city of Rome, which was at the other side of the world. He begged his way across lands and seas to Rome. By this time Rome was officially Christian. He arrived at a time when Stilicho, the Roman general, had gained a mighty victory over the Goths. To Stilicho there was granted a Roman triumph. There was this difference from the old days – now it was to the Christian Churches the crowds poured and to the heathen temples. There were the processions and the celebrations and Stilicho rode in triumph through the streets, with the young Emperor Honorius by his side. But one thing had lingered on into Christian Rome. There was still the arena; there were still the gladiatorial games. Nowadays Christians were no longer thrown to the lions; but still those captured had to fight and to kill each other to make a Roman holiday for the populace. Still men roared with the blood lust as the gladiators fought. Telemachus found his way to the arena. There were 80,000 people there. The chariot races were ending; and there was a tenseness in the crowd as the gladiators prepared to fight. Into the arena they came with their greeting. “Hail, Caesar! We who are about to die salute you!” The fight was on and Telemachus was appalled. Men for whom Christ had died were killing each other to amuse an allegedly Christian populace. He leapt the barrier. He was in between the gladiators, and, for a moment they stopped. “Let the games go on,” roared the crowd. They pushed the old man aside; he was still in his hermit’s robes. Again he came between them. The crowd began to hurl stones at him; they urged the gladiators to kill him and get him out of the way. The commander of the games gave an order; a gladiator’s sword rose, and flashed and stabbed; and Telemachus lay dead. And suddenly the crowd were silent. They were suddenly shocked that a holy man should have been killed in such a way. Quite suddenly there was a mass realization of what this killing really was. The games ended abruptly that day – and they never began again. Telemachus, by dying, had ended them. As Gibbon said of him, “His death was more useful to mankind than his life.” By losing his life he had done more than ever he could have done if he had husbanded it out in lonely devotion in the desert.

OBSERVATION:

What is so important in our life that we are willing to lose our life for it? What belief would drive us to make the ultimate sacrifice as did Telemachus? What matters above everything else? Sobering questions for each of us as we live in a world that is every more centered on “self”.

QUOTE:

“It's a funny thing about life, once you begin to take note of the things you are grateful for, you begin to lose sight of the things that you lack.” – Germany Kent

PRAYER:

Gracious God, you ask us to have a servants heart, but are we committed enough to place our life on the line for what we believe? Help us sort through the demands and priorities of our life and so order our life to bring praise to you. Amen

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Sermon this week is about Balaam and his talking donkey.