

“Hold the Value” **Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-10; Matthew 5:38-48**

Saint Marks United Methodist Church, Charleston WV 7th Sunday after Epiphany [February 23,] 2014

^{9:1} And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ² “Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy. ... ⁹ “When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. ¹⁰ And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the LORD your God.

^{5:38} “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic,^l let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers,^l what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Walter was just two years old when his Dad went to Vietnam. Walter was five years old when his Dad came home, in a wheelchair. Walter did not remember his Dad having legs. Later, when people told Walter that his Dad, Corporal Lockard McCarl came home a different man, in ways other than losing his legs, Walter did not know what they meant. Corporal Lockard McCarl, US Army, was just “Dad” to him.

On Walter’s 6th birthday, his Dad gave him a book. It was a handmade book with heavy leather covers, hand stitched. The pages were heavy too – seemed heavier than paper. Walter opened it. He could read big hand printed letters.

Page 1 To my son, Walter. I love you. Dad

Page 2 **Always hold the value. All else will take care of itself.**

Page 3 A medal and ribbon had been delicately stitched to the page so there were almost no wrinkles in the page itself, and yet it was firmly held in place.

Below the medal were these words:

Purple Heart. Tet Offensive. February 2, 1968. Tan Son Nhut Air Base.

I paid a heavy price to learn these Values.

Page 4 **Always hold the value. All else will take care of itself.**

VALUE #1 God’s Kingdom wins. Be a winner.

January 20, 1969

Walter looked at it again. Page 1 through Page 4. That’s all that was written. There were 4 empty pages that followed. He looked up at his Dad and saw that his eyes were damp. **“I’ll explain it to you, son,”** was all he said at that time.

But, throughout the year, Walter's Dad talked to him almost every day about what that value meant.

Three days before his next birthday, the leather book disappeared from its normal resting place. It later reappeared on Walter's 7th birthday. One more page had been carefully lettered in the book:

Page 5 **Always hold the value. All else will take care of itself.**
VALUE #2 God finds a way to love all His children. So can I.
January 20, 1970

Again Walter's Dad told him that he would explain. And throughout the year, almost every day, his Dad talked with Walter about what this second value meant, and how it was linked to the first. And then the same pattern followed in 1971: three days before birthday, the leather book disappeared but reappeared on Walter's 8th birthday. One more page had been carefully lettered:

Page 6 **Always hold the value. All else will take care of itself.**
VALUE #3 God's Kingdom wins with a greater power than violence.
January 20, 1971

And so the pattern continued for the next two years. Teaching of the VALUE and its relationship to the other VALUES on a regular basis, and a new page for each birthday.

Page 7 **Always hold the value. All else will take care of itself.**
VALUE #4 Always care for the poor, even at your own expense.
January 20, 1972

Page 8 **Always hold the value. All else will take care of itself.**
VALUE #5 It is impossible to love your enemy because he can't be your enemy when you love him. Love your enemy.
January 20, 1973

On that 10th birthday, Walter's Dad said, That's the last page. Those five VALUES are what you need to hold onto. All else will take care of itself.

Walter's Dad discussed the 5th Value regularly, as before, but, unfortunately only for a few days. On February 2, 1973 – exactly 5 years after he lost his legs, Corporal Lockard McCarl, US Army lost his life. Not by a mortar shell this time, but by a 440 cubic inch, 1972 Plymouth Road Runner muscle car, being driven by a fellow Vietnam vet, who had too much to drink that night.

EMT's on the scene told Walter's mother that they had heard Lockard McCarl saying over and over again, before he went into surgery, ***"It's alright. I held the values. It's alright."***

News of those last words spread, so that even the preacher used them in the funeral. He preached long and hard about how Corporal Lockard McCarl, US Army, practiced the values of patriotism, family, church, and sacrifice. **“THOSE were his values!”** the preacher said.

Ten year old Walter McCarl sat in the pew at the funeral, holding tightly a hand tooled leather bound book with just eight pages. He **knew** what were his father’s values.

He wasn’t sure how “all else worked out” for his Dad. But, in his heart, one thing he knew for certain: His Dad was a winner, because he had held the VALUES all the way:

1. **God’s Kingdom wins. Be a winner.**
2. **God finds a way to love all His children. So can I.**
3. **God’s Kingdom wins with a greater power than violence.**
4. **Always care for the poor, even at your own expense.**
5. **It is impossible to love your enemy because he can’t be your enemy when you love him. Love your enemy.**

And the one that held them all together: **Always hold the value. All else will take care of itself.**

Walter grew up like many teenagers of his generation. He went through a rebellious stage. He went through a wilderness time away from his church. He fell down a few times. But he always got back up. And he was never far from the leather bound legacy from his father.

One time – when he was in his 30’s, in the mid 1990’s – Walter showed the book to his pastor. The preacher turned the pages slowly and reverentially. **“Walter, I was in Tet. Much happened there that no one ever speaks. Your Dad paid a heavy price to learn these Values. Did you realize that your Dad got these values from my friend Jesus. He spoke them up on a mountain, to a group of people who were as poor and overrun as the mountain people of Vietnam, the Montagnards. Your Daddy was right. Always hold on to these values, and all else WILL take care of itself.”**

When Walter was 44 years old, he was offered the senior vice-presidency of the company where he worked. His wife and children were delighted. The job paid very well.

When Walter was 46 years old, he came home one night and told his wife, Mary Beth, that he was no longer working for that company. She was stunned and asked, **“How in the world ...?”** He told her, **“I’m a winner. I couldn’t hold the values and keep working there. But don’t worry; all else will take care of itself.”** She didn’t accept this quite as easily as he explained it, but she tried.

By the time he was 48 years old, Walter had worked so that they were just about out of the financial hole of the past two years. Walter’s boss at the company he left, had been indicted, convicted, and was going to prison. Mary Beth rejoiced

when she heard this news. Walter peevled her just a bit, when he said, ***“Honey, hold the values. George lost his way somehow. He’s not an enemy. He can’t be if we love him. And we are winners.”***

Mary Beth started to protest, but decided against it. She’d learned over the years that Walter simply would not let go of those VALUES in the leather book. They came from the two most important people in Walter’s life: Corporal Lockard McCarl, US Army, and Jesus. And, beside that, down deep, it’s why she loved him.

Walter McCarl turned 51 on the 20th of last month. He’s about to change jobs again. In news that shocked both insiders and outsiders, it was announced in Washington, DC, and in Walter and Mary Beth’s town, that the President was appointing Walter as Ambassador to Vietnam.

Senate confirmation hearings were projected to be quite interesting. Ambassadorial nominee Walter McCarl was asked by the local media if he were worried.

He smiled and said, ***“No. I hold the VALUES and all else will take care of itself.”***

Mary Beth privately advised him that he might not want to go into the specifics of those VALUES in the actual confirmation hearings. She had a notion that some of them might not play well in Washington politics.

He chuckled and said, ***“No, Mary Beth. I’m a winner. I’m not ashamed of MY values, DAD’s values, JESUS’ values. I can’t imagine that I’d hide them from a bunch of politicians who have no power to prevent me from being a winner. And ... just maybe ... if they hear my story, then maybe they won’t be afraid of becoming winners themselves.”***

1. God’s Kingdom wins. Be a winner.
2. God finds a way to love all His children. So can I.
3. God’s Kingdom wins with a greater power than violence.
4. Always care for the poor, even at your own expense.
5. It is impossible to love your enemy because he can’t be your enemy when you love him. Love your enemy.

And the one that held them all together: **Always hold the value. All else will take care of itself.**

Check the news when the hearings occur. I’m sure they will be VERY interesting. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.