

On May 12, 1962, 82-year-old General Douglas MacArthur, gave his last public speech less than two years before he died. He had returned to his beloved West Point to receive the Sylvanus Thayer Award, an award given each year at West Point for distinguished service to our country. I believe MacArthur's speech is one of the most eloquent ever written. I have reread it many times and have even heard a crude recording of the speech. One of our elders was there to hear it live. Andy Seidel was a cadet at West Point at the time and he was in the mess hall to hear the speech. There is a wide range of opinion on MacArthur as a soldier and as a man but not many can dispute the power of his words that day. His speech was based upon the West Point motto: Duty, Honor, Country. Let me read a small portion of what he said:

“Duty, Honor, Country. Those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying points: to build courage when courage seems to fail; to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith; to create hope when hope becomes forlorn...As I listened to those songs [of the glee club], in memory's eye I could see those staggering columns of the First World War, bending under soggy packs, on many a weary march from dripping dusk to drizzling dawn, slogging ankle-deep through the mire of shell-shocked roads, to form grimly for the attack, blue-lipped, covered with sludge and mud, chilled by the wind and rain, driving home to their objective, and for many, to the judgment seat of God. I do not know the dignity of their birth, but I do know the glory of their death. They died unquestioning, uncomplaining, with faith in their hearts, and on their lips the hope that we would go on to victory. Always, for them: Duty, Honor, Country; always their blood and sweat and tears, as we sought the way and the light and the truth...You are the leaven which binds together the entire fabric of our national system of defense. From your ranks come the great captains who hold the nation's destiny in their hands the moment the war tocsin sounds. The Long Gray Line has never failed us. Were you to do so, a million ghosts in olive drab, in brown khaki, in blue and gray, would rise from their white crosses thundering those magic words: Duty, Honor, Country.

The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here. My days of old have vanished, tone and tint. They have gone glimmering through the dreams of things that were. Their memory is one of wondrous beauty, watered by tears, and coaxed and caressed by the smiles of yesterday. I listen vainly, but with thirsty ears, for the witching melody of faint bugles blowing reveille, of far drums beating the long roll. In my dreams I hear again the crash of guns, the rattle of musketry, the strange, mournful mutter of the battlefield. But in the evening of my memory, always I come back to West Point. Always there echoes and reechoes: Duty, Honor, Country. Today marks my final roll call with you, but I want you to know that when I cross the river my last conscious thoughts will be of The Corps, and The Corps, and The Corps. I bid you farewell.”

As you study the Gospels you eventually realize that for Jesus, His last conscious thought was “the Kingdom, the Kingdom, the Kingdom.” After the resurrection Jesus rejoined His disciples to teach them, “things concerning the kingdom.” (Acts 1:3) He began His ministry talking about it. **Matthew 4:17** records His first words, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Throughout His brief ministry Jesus declared the kingdom to be of first importance, “Seek first the kingdom of God...” for it is more valuable than a pearl of great price or a treasure in a field. Seek the kingdom and God will take care of the rest. The Kingdom, the Kingdom, the Kingdom.

Just as MacArthur spoke of three “rallying points,” “duty, honor, country,” those who seek the kingdom rally around three missional objectives; pursue the lost, coach the found, and launch the faithful. Engage, coach, launch; those are our rallying points. That is what kingdom-minded people are to be about. Before we come to the table this morning, identifying with Jesus’ life and death, I want you to get a good picture of our kingdom objective. Heather video...

Engage, coach, launch. That is what you just saw and that is what we are to be about. Let me report on some of the ways people are pursuing these objectives here at Fellowship.

Engage – We began our “Renaissance” series with **Mark 2:14-15**, “As He passed by, He saw Levi the *son* of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him. ¹⁵ And it happened that He was reclining *at the table* in his house, and many tax collectors and sinners were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him.” The opening words of v. 14, “As He passed by...” remind me of the opening words of the Great Commission, “As you go...” Jesus modeled the awareness kingdom-minded people have as we encounter people every day. Every person we meet matters to God and will spend eternity somewhere. How can we engage them with the hope of sharing the Good News of God’s gift of eternal life with them?

We have over 20 mentors at Conrad High School engaging the families there by caring about their kids. Next Friday we are hosting a tail gate party for the Conrad football team at Hillcrest High School. We have people from Metro organizing the event. We have a couple small groups cooking and providing refreshments. We have had one of our partners get all the hot dogs donated for the party. What does it say to those kids and their families (38% refugees) that we would take the time to do this for them? Let’s pray that relationships are established and strengthened through this effort.

We have had 60-70 partners involved at the Biltmore Apartments not far from here. We’ve done a “Kids on the Go” Sunday over there and have begun building relationships. We will be back for a Christmas celebration led by Jason and the Crew. We don’t do these things to feel good about ourselves but to look for opportunities to share the things that matter most to people in our community.

Coach – Once we have engaged someone with the Good News we are to follow up with teaching. Jesus told His disciples that they were not only to make disciples by baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit but they were to “teach them everything I have commanded you.” Coaching is simply passing on what I have learned.

I am thankful that we have so many excellent coaches who are small group leaders, living room pastors, build up God’s team and leading them in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. We have a premarital class coaching those preparing for marriage. Mark McLanahan is taking on FPU to coach people in the area of finances.

Launch – What would happen if, once we engaged people with the Gospel, we were satisfied to just bring them together for coaching meetings but never send them out? What WOULD happen is what IS happening. The church is in danger of becoming more and more isolated and therefore irrelevant to the world around us as we gather in our specialized buildings talking to one another in code language about the same things over and over again. This is not what Jesus had in mind.

He took the disciples to “the other side.” They encountered a fierce storm. To their amazement, He spoke and calmed the storm. The point that is often made concerning this passage is that Jesus is Lord over the wind and the waves. True enough, but if that is the purpose of the boat ride then you would expect Jesus to say, “Good, you got the point of the storm, let’s head back to shore.” That’s not what happens. By taking them to the other side Jesus is saying, “As you launch out into new areas you will encounter tremendous opposition, fierce storms. But if you’re faith in me is greater than the wind and the waves you will get to the other side.”

Once they get there they encounter the demon-possessed Gentile man who is healed by Jesus. When he asks to join them Jesus says, **Mark 5:19-20** "Go home to your people and report to them ¹what great things the Lord has done for you, and *how* He had mercy on you." ²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.” This man is launched by Jesus and he takes the message to ten of the most pagan cities in the whole region.

Harvest Festival...Melinda Means and Linda Guest, members of our family sent out to France and Germany. Jon and Kim Freeman to India. Over 130 people who said, “I will consider going on a short term trip to support our global initiatives.” Closer to home we have been approached by a church that is struggling to keep its doors open. Established church with a nice facility in a strategic part of Dallas. They are asking us if we would consider coming alongside and help them keep the light shining in their neighborhood. There are a lot of questions to be asked and conversations to be had but just think of the possibility. We could launch a contingent from this church to populate that church and reach out into that neighborhood.

The kingdom, the kingdom, the kingdom. Let that be our passion. There are thousands of Heathers out there, men and women who need Jesus, who need to be coached so they too can have an opportunity to make a kingdom investment with their one brief life. You never know when you might encounter someone like Heather but encounter her you will.

Let’s pray. Pray for those reaching out to Conrad and Biltmore...small groups...new fields...pray for the necessary resources to pursue these objectives. We continue to fall behind in our budget and we’re not sure why. I know the economy is bad but it was bad last summer and we made our budget. We will do whatever it takes to keep this vision alive. We will live within our means. We need a generous November and December to keep from cutting back on staff and strategic initiatives. If you are not invested in kingdom work don’t wait another day to do so. Let’s pray.