

“The Man in the Red Bandana”

Luke 4:16-21

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August 8, 2004

Communion Devotion

The release of the 911 Commission Report has renewed our focus upon the Attack upon America that occurred almost three years ago. The report is filled with stories of heroic citizens that risked their lives to save others. While reading excerpts from the report, I was reminded of the man in the red bandanna.

This young man mysteriously appeared out of the smoke and horror to lead many people to safety. For over an hour, he gave directions and assisted frightened people. Wrapped around his face to protect him from the smoke and soot was a red bandana.

Six months later, the body of this man was found intact, including the bandana, alongside firefighters in a makeshift command center in the South Tower lobby, buried under 110 stories of rubble. He was then identified as Welles Crowther.

He graduated from Boston College where he played lacrosse and hockey. He was known to other students as the one that always carried a red bandana. He was also known for his unselfishness and sacrificial spirit. In hockey games, he would feed the puck to the team's lowest scoring player so he could score. That's the kind of generous spirit he had.

At age sixteen, he became a junior firefighter, following in his dad's footsteps. His dream was to become a firefighter or public servant. On September 11, 2001, this volunteer fireman and equities trader became both as he said to people groping for an escape route, "Follow me. I know the way out. I will lead you to safety."

He led dozens to safety that day. He even carried those that could not walk. However, he continued going upstairs to get more people instead of leaving the burning building and saving his own life.

In his memory, the Fellowship of the Red Bandana has been established. It is an organization that continues Welles' good work of sacrificially helping people.

I doubt that Jesus ever wore a red bandana but he, also, came to lead people to safety. He came to rescue people that were being crushed under the load of selfishness, greed, ego, immorality, injustice, exploitation, prejudice and legalism. He came to set people free so they could achieve their God-given potential and soar to unlimited heights.

For you see, this was his dream. Listen to his words recorded in Luke 4:16-21. "He went to Nazareth where he had been brought up and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it to the attendant and sat down. Then the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him and he began by saying, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'"

Did Jesus fulfill his mission? Did he accomplish his dream? Yes, but it cost him his life. Like Welles Crowther, he died under the rubble of evil and hate. However, unlike

Welles, he did not stay there until rescuers found him. His Father breathed new life in him and sent him back into the world so that he could continue the work he started.

Today, as we take communion, we remember his spirit of compassion and the sacrifice he made on our behalf. We acknowledge his courage and are inspired by it. We thank God for our Lord's glorious resurrection as we take his hand and let him lead us to safety in the midst of personal and corporate chaos. And we celebrate the gifts of abundant and eternal life that he has given to us and offers to everyone.