

## Transcription of 20TS202

Acts 21:16

"Mnason: Lessons From An Old Disciple"

April 29, 2020

Let's open our Bibles tonight, if you have one with you, there in Acts 21:16.

We've been spending our Wednesday evenings - at least the last three or four of them - looking at some Bible characters whose lives and whose examples are designed, I think, to address our own, our walks with God. Sometimes these characters in the Bible - and there are many of them - appear on the pages of God's Word for just a minute, and then they seem to disappear as quickly as they appear; men and women who, almost their mere shadows cast in the Scriptures, can teach us much about the heart of God. And they are immortalized by the Holy Spirit because God puts them in His Word, though they are oftentimes relatively unknown. I think you know all the big names and the big players, if you will, in God's stories to us. But sometimes, like a cursory outline or a hasty stroke with a pencil, maybe a chapter, maybe a paragraph, sometimes, like tonight, one sentence; and we have lots to learn about what God would want to do in our lives and what God would want from us as we walk with Him.

So, we're in chapter 21:16 of Acts tonight. It is one verse, and let me read it to you. It says, "Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us" (Paul says, and Luke) "and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge." The very name "Mnason of Cyprus" tells us his name and his birthplace, a couple of things about him. Number one - that he would be in the same class with Paul and several others in that he was a Hellenist. A Hellenist is a Jew who, because of where he was born in a Gentile culture, though he is a Jew by descendancy, he is Gentile in the sense of his experience. He lived on Gentile soil, he spoke oftentimes like Mnason here would - Greek, as his native language. He came from Cyprus, an island where Barnabas, you might remember, was born. It was also a place that he and John Mark, his little nephew, would return to after spending years with Paul out on the road on Paul's first missionary journey. Cyprus plays a big part in the Scriptures. It was also the place when Paul went on his first journey, Cyprus was the very first place that he went to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, Cyprus was the place that he saw his first convert, at least recorded convert. It was the place that he saw God's power at work in a very distinct way. We don't know if Mnason, here, knew Barnabas (they came from the same island); that we can't be sure of. But we are told, here in verse 16, that

Mnason was an early disciple. "*Archaios*." It means primeval or original or ancient, and it would suggest that this man was, early on, in the church. Maybe he had spent time listening to Jesus Himself. Maybe he was part of that group, there in Acts early on, that came to the Lord and surrendered their lives to Him on Pentecost. In any event, he was an "O.B.," an original believer, if you will. As such, he belonged to a continually diminishing nucleus of folks who, over the last thirty years, had seen Jesus in the flesh, had maybe been drawn to Him by His own words, or maybe, like I said, standing in the crowds (in Acts 2), he would have heard Peter's first sermon given on the Day of Pentecost, where he and 3,000 others came to give Jesus their lives and to embrace Him as the Savior.

The very fact, here in our verse, that he is mentioned as an "early disciple" I think would give him a place of honor in the church, especially among the second and third generation of saints who had survived the Jesus movement, if you will, of their day and the revival that had begun. He was older than most in the church then. He had aged well. His experiences with the Lord had strengthened him rather than worn him down. And like the old apostle John, who writes from his heart his letters (towards the end of your Bible, for the most part in his 90's), Mnason was also a fellow who could speak about what the Lord wanted to do, what the Lord had done and yet what the Lord was still doing. He was still walking with God.

We gather from this verse that this man had moved to Jerusalem. Apparently he didn't know Paul, but he did seem to know those who lived in Caesarea, where he had resided some seventy miles away to the southwest of Jerusalem along the coast. And they seemed to know him well enough to believe that, when Paul was coming to town with a big entourage of people to Jerusalem (he was bringing lots of money, you might remember, from the Gentile churches that he had planted, in the hopes that the giving from these churches would secure a relationship between the Gentile saints and the Jewish saints who were still learning to embrace the idea, at least in Jerusalem they were), the Lord's grace would save anyone, and it would just go to Jesus and believe and have life. And Paul hoped to be able to bridge that gap between Jewish and Gentile saints in this awkward 1<sup>st</sup>-century battle with prejudice, especially religious kind of strain.

So Mnason - old guy - lives in the center of religious pride, if you will, a resistance to change, and yet he would be the one that God would use to welcome Paul. Paul was rarely welcome in Jerusalem. He was at odds with the church there because

of his openness to God's grace, if you will, and it would require some time for people to embrace that. He was looked upon with suspicion because of his activities with the Gentiles. If you continue reading, you might remember that Paul would be asked by the church in Jerusalem to make some vows with some men and to sponsor them into things that, really, Paul probably wouldn't have done on his own because they were kind of traditions of the past that pointed to Christ; but he went along with them because he was so interested in bridging the gap, and it would turn out to be kind of difficult for everyone, for Paul included. But into that city, with that outlook and amongst those saints, stood this older saint, Mnason. By the way, the "M" is silent. He's very trendy, his name was. And no doubt him taking Paul into his home - and it must have been a large place and plus he had a place in Caesarea, he was probably a wealthy man - would have given Paul some credibility amongst the church. But all that from this one verse. That's what we are told of him - that he was older, that he was one of the original believers, that he came as a Hellenist from a Greek culture though he was of Jewish descent, that he lived in Jerusalem, had come from Caesarea, was well known among those who were in the church, and was now the fellow that they were sure would open his doors to greet this entourage of pastors from all over the globe, it seems, that were coming to Jerusalem to offer the sacrifices and the giving of the congregations to those that were struggling in Jerusalem.

So what can we learn, then, from Mnason? What would he teach us? A couple of things that I would have you write down, if you're taking notes. And one is be sure to hold on to Jesus through all the seasons of life. I mean, let's put ourselves in Mnason's shoes for a minute. He had been walking with the Lord for a long time. Right? Many years had passed since a young Mnason had heard, maybe, Jesus speak or listened to Peter's sermon, which had given him goosebumps and brought a tear to his eye and, oh, that day was so many days ago. Now Calvary had come. The Resurrection had come and gone. They were three decades behind them. They were distant memories for him. I'm sure his own life and mind had changed from the excitement of being a young man in the Lord to, now, the soberness of being older. He, no doubt, had his feelings changed about life. As you get older, you certainly don't look at life the same way. And think about Mnason - many of his friends had died, were gone. The persecution against the church had been brutal. James and Peter and John were still around, though Peter had left town. We're really not sure if he had relations with these other original guys. But, for the most part, in Mnason's world in Jerusalem, it was a new crowd. New faces, new names to remember. There were few who he could talk to about the former days or of the

glory that had been those Jesus days of old. There was a new generation that had risen up, the third generation by now. New ideas, new thoughts about how to best reach the lost - the good news of Jesus. Yet one thing hadn't changed at all for this older guy. His love for the Lord was as strong as ever. It was the basis for his life. Nothing could touch that. He had continued to grow in the Lord, and though the years had passed, his love for the Lord had grown year by year. Blessings that that early faith had blossomed over the years, and now, in his old age, this guy was still hangin' in there. He was a man under whose feet time was crumbling away, but he was standing firm in the Lord, and he had been for decades.

What can I learn from Mnason? Hang in there, man. You gotta hang in there. When it was new, when it was exciting, when it's hard, when it's challenging, when we have no answers for our questions. Just look at what we're going through today. Lord, what are You doing? Why are You doing that? I have no idea. I just know He's good, and He knows all things, and He does everything well. So Mnason had been through a lot of stuff. He'd seen a lot of it in his life, but he had chosen to stay the course. He had what Paul would write to the Hebrews (10:35), "not cast away from him his confidence." When Barnabas was sent, early on, by the church in Jerusalem to see what the Lord was doing in Antioch, and that there was a revival there, and he had (back in chapter 11 of Acts) gone to spy it out, it records there (Luke did) that when he arrived in Antioch, he saw the grace of God, it made him glad; and then his message, Barnabas', to the church at Antioch was that he could encourage them that, with purpose of heart, they should continue with the Lord. In other words, that's really the goal. You want to get to the end of the road. You want to run across the finish line, not see it from a distance or wish you could get there. The old apostle John was no stranger to running the race for decades. He outlived all of the apostles. He was in his 90's, and it was probably the 90's, if not a little later, when he wrote the gospel, wrote 1 and 2 and 3 John, wrote the book of Revelation. He was late on, and yet he wrote in that time of the great blessings of knowing the Lord. And by then, everyone that he knew that he could share with that he could reminisce with was gone.

If you can, turn in your Bible - a couple of.....for just a few minutes - to 1 John 2. It is one of John's little letters that he wrote to the church. But it kind of affects what we're looking at as far as standing fast with the Lord, holding on through the seasons of life. John wrote, in 1 John 2:12, these words, "I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to

you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one." As John, the elder statesman of the church by this time - third and four generations removed from the cross, thinks about the people he's writing to, he addresses the family of God at different levels of spiritual maturity. He mentions three groups. He mentions each of them twice and, with great optimism, he talks to them about staying with the program, moving ahead, growing as you go. Notice that he writes, in verse 12 here, "I write to you, little children." It is the word "*teknion*." It means born ones. It is the word used to come into existence. It's actually a verb, and it is a general kind of endearing term that John will use for the flock, you that are children of God, born of God. And notice that he says, in verse 12, "Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." All of us are God's little kids, whether we're old or whether we're young, having this one thing in common. We have all experienced the forgiveness of our sins. And John is writing to these saints, these "little ones" and says, "Look, you became God's child, His little child, born of Him, the day that you came to Him and had your sins forgiven." That's the day you became His child. Isaiah would write, in chapter 38:17, of God's work through His Son that He would "cast all of our sins behind His back," that the LORD would remove sin from us through the sacrifice of His Son. We read in Psalm 103:12, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." God has just, through His Son, removed from us that which separated us from God - our sin. And the day that that happens, for His name's sake - for Jesus' sake, because of what He has done, we were forgiven, and we are made God's people. So the new birth into God's family gives us insight. Right? We come to know where we stand with God - what He has done, what He has accomplished. And as we do, we get new life. We're babies, if you will, in the Lord. We know that our sins are forgiven.

But, look, that's not where you stop. That's where you start - a child that is born. There's a lot of growth that still needs to take place. And Mnason is certainly a fellow that stuck with it. Not for a day, not for a week or a year, but for decades now, as he watched the church change and many die and the pressure ratchet up, people come and go, folks walking away. And yet, when all is said and done, he's still in the middle of the battle, here, as Paul arrives, and he's ready to be used by the Lord to provide housing and support for a man that wasn't very welcome in the very place that he lived.

But we have to start to grow. Peter wrote, in his second letter to the church, "Grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Grow in the grace and the knowledge of the Lord" (2 Peter 3:18). Paul wrote to the Ephesians, in chapter 4:15, that we should "speak the truth in love and grow up in Him who is the head of all things, even Christ." So, sure, you start as a little child, but you certainly don't want to stay there because to go from spiritual babyhood (I'm pretty sure that's a word) to maturity is God's desire for all of us.

If you go down towards the end of verse 13, you will read the words, "I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father." And you should know that that little term, "little children," is different than the one at the beginning. This is the word not for a newborn but for a little child, if you will, an infant, maybe, one who's been around for a little while. And notice that his claim to fame, as he begins to grow, is that he knows that he has a Father in heaven. He doesn't know much else, but he has a basic, now, fundamental truth in his life that he can hang on to. He knows the Father. How good is that! First you're just born again. You go to God, and He gave His life for you. He sent His Son, and you receive it because you realize your guilt. And then, born again, God begins to reveal His love to you, and the first relationship that is established in our understanding is that we have a relationship with God as His child. He's our Father in heaven. Babies usually first recognize their parents' faces. I guess that's the way it should be. Nothing more thrilling than for a mom or a dad to see that recognition in that little baby's face. "Oh, I know who that is." They may not be able to say anything, but, boy, you can sure tell the difference. And I think that nothing really changes in the church either. There's nothing more thrilling than to see an influx of new believers into a church where people are just so thrilled. "The Lord is my Father! I can pray to Him in heaven." And to see that excitement and that joy that come - that's the way it should be. We have new believer classes on a regular basis to help new believers grow in the Lord. And it was Peter, in his first letter, who said to the church, "as newborn babes, you should desire the pure milk of the word so that you can grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). So this little child, in verse 13 at the end, is different from the new-birth one at the beginning. But notice he is only aware of the basics. But it is an important basic to understand. He realizes he has a relationship with God, his status before the Lord.

Now that's not enough. Babies are cute while they're babies, but they're not very cute if they remain babies. A 20-year-old sucking his thumb is not very cute. In fact, I think maternity wards are designed for a quick turnover. They're not a

lengthy-stay facility. But some people grow slower than others. The idea is to grow, and I don't think we're too far off the subject here - Mnason is a fellow that stuck with the program, walked with God through thick and thin. He saw it through, and he is still there standing, as we get there to Acts 21. Paul, when he wrote the 1 Corinthian letter (1 Corinthians 3:1), said, "I'd like to speak to you as spiritual people, but you're just carnal." And he said, "I've got to talk to you like you're still babes in Christ. You haven't really moved forward. I fed you with milk, and I still can't give you solid food. You're not able to receive it. You're envying and striving, and division is everywhere. You're behaving like mere men," which is an interesting term. "You're not grown up." Maybe you don't talk like the spiritual person that you should be, you're not looking at life like you should - through God's eyes, you're still little kids. But from John's standpoint, it's the progression, right? It's the new birth. It's the new awareness of a young infant and then, as they get older, that there's a relationship that they have with the Lord. And that is supposed to be strengthened. John writes to just encourage. He writes from a very positive side - this is what we need to do.

Notice he then turns to address the "young men," and the word "young men" is the word that is the word for youth in Greek, and it is applied almost across the board, even in classical Greek, to those that are under 40 years old. So if you're 38, you're still a youth. Okay? But notice the different characterizations here. Because now this young man has "overcome the wicked one," in verse 13; and they are kind of moving forward in their strength, verse 14, "you're strong, the word of God abides in you." So, certainly the characteristics of a youth, of a young person, of someone that is growing and has all of their life ahead of them, is strength and oftentimes boundless energy. John calls us to grow up spiritually from newborns to infants to young men and women in the Lord, that we might "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might," as Paul wrote to the Ephesians (6:10). So, move from the basics, press on to know God's Word, gain spiritual strength from knowing who the Lord is. And, as a result, you will overcome the devil. You will be a victor. Right? An overcomer. The truth of God's Word settles in your heart over time. You live it out, and it becomes evident to you that God's ways are true and work. You find victory in the battlefield.

It's interesting talking to folks right now kind of all shut up, that some folks are extremely fearful, extremely on edge, not really sure where to go, where to turn, what comes next, very off-balance, I guess. And then you talk to others that just go, "Well, the Lord's figured it out. God's in charge." And they find that rest.

Who's right? Well, the Lord is in charge. But until that truth grips your heart, you've got to move from newborn to infant, and then you've got to get to where you can engage the battle as young men and women in the Lord and find victory through His Word. Now that takes time. There's no way you just get there overnight any more than that line on the door that your parents made for your growth happened overnight. It's usually years of growing and standing on your toes and stretching to get an inch more in your stature. But that's God's plan - is that you might move forward. And notice that the young men overcame the enemy, found their strength in the Word of God that abided in them, and they weren't overcome by the world, by the flesh, by the devil. They were in a position where they could survive whatever came their way.

But there's even a further step to make, and I think this is where, certainly, Mnason was living now, and that is the word "father." And notice he addresses the father in both verses 13 and 14, and he doesn't change what he says about them. He says the same thing in both of the verses. He says, "Because you have known Him who is from the beginning." And now we find this established believer. He's discipling others. He provides direction for the young. He has a long-standing relationship with God. And because you can't really improve on that, John just repeats it twice, if you will. Right? No babies, no infants, past the word "young," they now are in that place where they can help others; they can grow. That doesn't mean they have outgrown what the Lord wants to do, but they have come to a place where their life is fruitful and supportive and strong.

I'm always encouraged - and it's interesting to me that this pandemic, which has driven a lot of people to look at the internet - I've gotten five or six letters in the last five or six weeks from folks I went to high school with, I've never spoken to since high school. And it's interesting to touch base with them. I've been able to talk back and forth to some Christian brothers and sisters who got saved about the time I did; haven't seen them for years or heard from them. But when they say, "How's the Lord treatin' you, and what's goin' on?" and you hear that God is continuing His work in them, and they're interested, it's so encouraging. I've certainly run into lots of folks over the years who've just quit. I don't know why they quit. I don't know what's going on in their hearts. I don't know if they really knew the Lord or not or why they walked away or why they give up, and some seem to turn around and go back to the world. But so encouraged when you run into guys that fall into the Mnason category. He's an early disciple, he's an early laborer, if you will. He was part of the foundation, and yet he's continuing on. He's standing



fast. Years of faithfulness. And it shows in his life. Good to hear about folks like that. And we need to realize that this isn't a sprint, it's a marathon. You've got to keep running. Can't sit down in the infield. Can't just cash it in. You're not going to hand off the baton to someone. You're going to run until the running is finished.

But Mnason is one of those guys who wouldn't put his hand to the plow and look back (Luke 9:62). He didn't grow weary in well doing (Galatians 6:9). He pressed on. He was living out what you read in Isaiah 40:30. He said, "The youths shall faint and be weary, the young men will utterly fall, but those that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they'll mount up with wings as eagles, they'll run and not be weary, they'll walk, they won't faint." They'll have supernatural, divine strength to accomplish their work. And here's a guy who is older and certainly has seen a lot, who is going to be placed among those saints in chapter 11 of Hebrews or even in the encouragement that Paul gives in chapter 12 of men and women who have finished well, but they have finished.

Mnason is kind of like Caleb. You might remember Caleb back in Joshua 14. In his old age, he was the one who came with his sons and wanted to take a mountain that the LORD had promised him. He seemed to do his best work in his 80's. Can you imagine? Still at the forefront of ministry, still going. So, time had aged Mnason, but it hadn't aged his walk. In fact, he grew better with time. He had aged very well, and he was as productive as he had ever been. So, learn from Mnason that we're supposed to stay faithful to the Lord and press on in every part of our life - in the newborn phase, in the infant phase, when we're young and when we're old.

Second of all - and I guess it builds on the first, and we can go back to this verse in Acts if you like - there's another lesson I think we can learn from Mnason in just what we read about him. And that is we find him in Acts, as far as age is concerned, older; as far as growth, seasoned; as far as ministry, that has pressed on for years. But though those are attributes that define him, what he doesn't allow to happen in his life - and which is, I think, apparent - is that he doesn't allow the fact that he is older make him unmovable. Or somehow he isn't settled in because this is "just the way I've always done it," and it leaves him unable to embrace what God is currently doing. One of the problems with getting older in the Lord is that you can develop an arrogance and kind of a separation that is both sinful and, I think, unhealthy. Mnason was going to welcome Paul, the Gentile lover, into his home in Jerusalem. He would do so despite the prevailing opinions about him. He would embrace what God had obviously been doing across the world by His

grace through Paul for generations, for years, if you will, through three missionary journeys. He would be flexible. He would be open-minded. He was welcoming this awesome work of God. He was committed to the old ways of faith and grace, but he was also open to what God was doing at the time - with the Gentiles and the open door - which is a wonderful combination that you rarely find among folks that are older. They usually settle in, are very hard to move, rigid, kind of poured in place; and so, with time, they become less effective, less available, less useful. But yet God isn't boxed in to a method. His Word and the truth don't change, but His methods do. And I think that from Mnason we can learn there's a danger for men with strong convictions to kind of grip at every kind of trifle of practice and unimportant bit of creed and hold onto it with this tenacity that they should be holding onto the vitals of their faith. But instead of letting God do His work in a new way, they're obstinate enough to be dogged in their self-determination, and they freeze up. They just don't allow God to work. Bones grow old, bodies stiffen with age. But that shouldn't happen to your faith. And it certainly didn't happen to this older gentleman, who finds himself now in a place that God really wants to use him.

I grew up in the Jesus Movement. We all had long hair and were called hippies, and we'd sit in concerts for hours. And there was a tremendous atmosphere of genuine love amongst the people, very much unconcerned for many things. And it was kind of a check-out generation. I'm not so sure it was the best, but in it, God did this remarkable work. Today, the young kids in the church are more interested than they've ever been in education. They are certainly much more technological in their evangelistic efforts. They seem to love really large corporate worship services. They blog about everything. I never get a phone call, I get an email, I get a text. I'll get it from our offices, 50' away. But better a text than a call, I guess, or a walkin' over. Is that worse? Better? It's neither. God is doing something today that He didn't do when I was young. For Mnason, I think Mnason would have fit perfectly in our culture. He knew the Lord. He knew God was good. And regardless of age, God was doing a work.

So, unchanging hearts, certainly, to the truths of God but with the flexibility to see that God uses different methods. And I think that's a pretty important lesson because here's a guy living in the thickness of religious strife in Jerusalem. And, as an older guy, you would expect him to come out on the side of tradition and on the side of the majority and maybe be very outspoken about it. But he does exactly the opposite. And the people from Caesarea that know him well without, it

seems, even asking him, say, "Oh, we'll just go to Mnason's house. It'll be great. He has plenty of room." And they were right. He was a fellow that would welcome the apostle to the Gentiles, a move contrary to Jerusalem's tight-knit group of naysayers.

So not only do we have to stick with our walks through all of the seasons of life, older shouldn't mean settled. You're older. Hey, you've got a lot of information, so be open, now, to what God wants to do. I've seen older folks at church lamenting the worship. If it isn't a hymn, "Oh, it's too loud, it's got too many words, it's too noisy, I've got to wait in the foyer." Well, I think you've got to get over all that stuff. Worship is a heart issue. And if you want to reach your generation, you've got to kind of live in the generation you find yourself in. And you might be able to look back with fondness, but that's back there. Whatever God did, praise the Lord. But what is He doing now? You want to be a part of that, you're going to have to be willing to be open to His ways.

Finally, I would like to say in an age of celebrity and personality - where the issue of public persona is cultivated and developed, even in the church, where a social influencer is a job description - it is refreshing to find a fellow who, if you read the text here, really has one word to describe him. He was a "disciple." He was a "disciple." No great feats of his life are recorded. He wasn't an apostle. He wasn't a pastor. He wasn't a teacher. He wasn't a preacher. He wasn't a worship leader. There is no eloquence found in his life that is mentioned. There is no genius that distinguished him from everyone else. He didn't do some great, heroic deed. He didn't accomplish some huge task. All we know of him is that he loved and followed the Lord all the days of his life, and he will forever live in the world's memory with one word attached to his name - he was a "disciple."

The world is going to forget about you when you're gone. If the Lord tarries, for a few years, you might be at the forefront of the memories of your family or friends. But even a large circle of friends is liable to drop off in a generation. It doesn't really matter what they think. You'll just kind of come and go. You'll be a footnote. No one will remember. The only thing that really matters is did you get your name in the Lamb's Book of Life? Are you mentioned there? And next to your name, is that word next to yours, "disciple"? Because that really says it all.

He had lived for the Lord and done what he could. He hadn't been called to the regions of the world like Paul. He hadn't been called to direct the church like, even

in Jerusalem, James had. Nobody asked him to write a book of remembrance of the Master's ministry like Matthew or Mark or Luke or John. He hadn't even been asked to give his life like Stephen. But he would do what he could. And when Paul, the Jewish man who loved the Gentiles - and God had sent him to the uttermost parts - when he came to town, he would open his house to him and his traveling companions, and he would take them in and embrace them and give the support to them that they needed. Jesus would say, "If you receive a prophet in the name of a prophet, you'll receive a prophet's reward" (Matthew 10:41). And I think that Mnason kind of entered in here, and he receives those that God is using, and his part is to be supportive of them. There's an old law in Israel regarding war and its soldiers, and you find it in 1 Samuel 30. But it is a law that was instituted when those who had gone to war and brought back the spoils didn't want to share it with those who had been left back in the camp. And the law was written for them, and it literally says that the men in the rear who guarded the camp, those who kept the lines of communication open, those who provided for those in the frontlines would receive the same honor, the same blessing, and the same reward as those who had led the charge or entered into the enemy's camp, scattered the ranks. It doesn't really matter what God has called you to do. But what does matter is whatever God's called you to do, that you do it. And here's a fellow that lives a very obscure life. Not a lot of applause. In fact, this is it. You memorize this verse, that's all you have and the little clues that we are given in it. That's it. He really isn't applauded. He doesn't seem to come to the forefront. He certainly comes and goes about as quickly as you can, and yet the description of him is the one you want when all is said and done. You were a learner, a follower of Christ.

You might remember Mark 14 when Mary, there on that Saturday, took what she owned, what she had, an expensive bottle of perfume. And I think her service to the Lord was determined by her love for Him. She broke this bottle, poured it on the Lord to anoint Him for His death. It says there that the fragrance filled the house. It was a costly ointment. She wiped His feet with her hair after she poured it on. And the mention was just she did what she could. She did the right thing. Judas tried to complain about the financial impact of what she might have accomplished, and Jesus said, "You just leave her alone. She did what she was given to do." And that really is the bottom line.

So here's an old disciple whose hospitality is immortalized by the writings of Luke in Acts and reminds us that the smallest service in the name of the Lord is remembered and treasured by Him. You can spend your life writing your

accomplishments in the sand, but the wind will blow them away. Certainly the winds of time will. But this one passing act from an obscure Christian saint to shelter a company of travel-stained servants would make him an everlasting name. You know his name now. The "M" is silent. Don't forget. Jeremiah would write, in chapter 45:5, "Do you seek great things for yourself? Don't seek them. I will give you life as a prize wherever you go." Don't seek glory for you. Seek Me, and I'll give you life. I'll use you. Your life will matter. Rest assured that filling your little corner with unnoticed, faithful works out of a love for the Lord, in the end will bring you the highest reward from the Lord. "God is not unjust to forget," Paul wrote to the Hebrews in chapter 6:10, "your labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you're ministering to the saints."

So here's a guy's character that hopefully can touch ours. He stuck with it through the difficulties of the years. He grew and didn't step away or turn away. He held on to Jesus through it all. When he got old, he brought with him into that aged life, lots of wisdom, but he was far from rigid. He was flexible and open to what God wanted to do. He was open to hear what God wanted to say. He was willing to do what the Lord set before him. And learn from him that, just because you're out of the limelight - maybe people aren't able to praise your work or even acknowledge your service, God keeps real good records. And an obscure life, a beautiful life, he makes it into the annals of God's Word, and so will you. So, one guy, one verse, lots to learn.

Shall we pray before we have communion tonight?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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