



September 2023

“Never give up on something that you can’t go a day without thinking about.”
~Winston Churchill

Mrs. Craddock was a faithful churchgoer. She took her children to church almost every Sunday. Because of all her church activities, on most Sunday afternoons, her husband would often complain about Sunday dinner being late. One day, the minister of the church called to speak with Mrs. Craddock. But Mr. Craddock answered the phone.

Mr. Craddock responded to the minister’s request by saying, “I know what the church wants. Church doesn’t care about me. Church just wants another name, another pledge, another name, another pledge. Isn’t that the name of the game, Reverend?”

This was not just a one-time conversation; this was every time the minister called to speak with Mrs. Craddock. Whenever the church would have a revival or some sort of conference, Mrs. Craddock would always find herself in the church kitchen preparing meals for parishioners. But Mr. Craddock despised it. Mrs. Craddock would walk through the front door on pins and needles because she knew Mr. Craddock would be waiting on the sofa for her with a can in his hand wearing a white T-shirt with the same frown and verbal spill every time. “At that church again, huh! They just want another name, another pledge, another name, another pledge. That’s the name of the game, dear.”

One of their sons, Fred, said he must have heard it a thousand times throughout his childhood and young adult years. But there was one time when Mr. Craddock did not say it. He was in the veteran’s hospital, and he was down to about 73 pounds. They’d taken out his throat; put in metal tubes; and the X rays had just about burned him to pieces. His son, Fred, who was now an adult, had flown back home to visit with his dad. Mr. Craddock could not speak, nor could he eat. When Fred arrived at his dad’s hospital room, he opened the door. When he opened the door...the smell...the aroma...the scent that smacked him in the face could only be compared to walking into flower shop. Fred looked around the room and there were plants, freshly cut flowers all on the windowsill and next to the bed. There was also a stack of sympathy cards about 20 inches deep next to his bed. Even on that food tray in front of Mr. Craddock, there was a little rose and a card with a handwritten message on it. Every card, every rose, and every arrangement in that room were from persons or groups from the church.

Mr. Craddock—being hooked up to all those machines, opened his eyes and saw his son, Fred (standing next to the bed), reading one of the cards. Mr. Craddock could not speak at all; so, with his trembling hands he took a Kleenex box (and a pen) and wrote on the side of it a line from Shakespeare. He wrote: *In this harsh world, draw your breath in pain to tell my story.* Fred (with tears welling up in his eyes) looked at his dad and said, “What is your story, daddy?”

And he wrote again three words that caused his son’s heart to drop from his chest into the pit of his stomach; he wrote: *I was wrong.*

As people of faith, as parents, as spouses/partners, employees/employers, and as citizens of the earth, sometimes we may feel like our work is in vain. This is especially the case when, week after week, month after month, year after year, and in some cases, decade after decade, we are working toward something that yields little to no fruit. Sometimes it can feel as if our deeds are misunderstood, overlooked, unappreciated, and/or ineffective. I’m sure that’s how some of the parishioners, Mrs. Craddock, and her minister felt (in the story above). But I want to remind you of the words of the first century theologian and

philosopher Paul. He said in his letter to the churches in the region of Galatia, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest, if we do not give up.”

So, let me encourage you to never ever give up. Never ever give up on a wayward child that seems to continue to be lured off the straight and narrow path. Never ever give up on a relative that is struggling with an addiction or bad habit. Never ever give up on a spouse or partner—even if it appears that their love has grown cold. Never ever give up on your attempt to create *a just world for all*. Because at the proper *God-ordained* time, you will reap a harvest, if you don't give up. Amen!

Pastor Michael