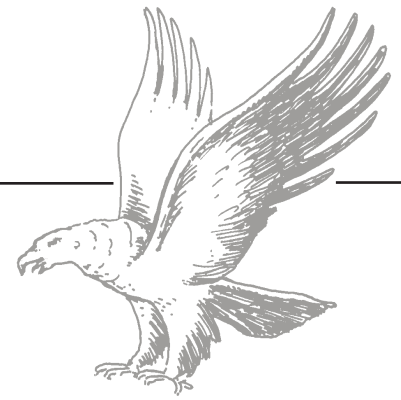


Wings

*“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles.”
Isaiah 40:31*



March 13, 2016

The People Forget

The great mass of humanity have more power than they give themselves credit for. Unfortunately, they usually squander that power by forgetting the God who gave it to them, to their own ruin.

“When they had pasture, they were filled; they were filled and their heart was exalted; therefore they forgot Me” (Hos. 13:6).

“Because My people have forgotten Me, they have burned incense to worthless idols. And they have caused themselves to stumble in their ways . . .” (Jer. 18:15).

History books deal with the exploits of the powerful, the rich, and the daring. But the *real* story of humanity is told in the lives of the billions of nameless, faceless individuals who live out their lives in obscurity, toiling daily to add their tiny piece to the big picture.

The role of ordinary people in writing the story of mankind is not limited to their collective accomplishments; they are equally responsible for the tragedies of history. We like to blame our politicians and generals for making a mess of things, but the larger population has a hand in setting up those disasters. The Old Testament prophets recognized this. They lashed out at the corruption of the ruling classes, but were just as critical of

the whole population for the greed and self-centeredness that dominated their daily lives. The people forgot God and the moral standard He represented, and that neglect always came back to bite them.

Carl Sandburg addressed this theme in his poem, “I Am the People, The Mob” (1916). He described the masses as a powerful but abused entity who produces the world’s goods while bearing up under terrible hardship. But again and again, the poet noted, they forget the lessons that history teaches them. Still, there is hope. “When I, the People, learn to remember, when I, the People, use the / lessons of yesterday and no longer forget who robbed me last year, / who played me for a fool”— ah, *then* the tables will be turned, and the people will no longer be taken advantage of!

Of course, Sandburg wrote this a hundred years ago, and the people’s memory hasn’t improved much, has it? Politicians still take advantage of their followers, and the little guy still gets burned. And we have no expectation that this pattern will ever change. Why? Not

because today’s rulers are more clever, but because—in the words of both Sandburg and the prophets—*the people forget*. They forget God and the values by which the wise find success. They forget yesterday’s charlatans, and are captivated by the glib hucksters of today who promise them something for nothing. And they fall for it once again.

Whether we’re talking about Old Testament theocracies, twentieth-century social paradises, or today’s capitalist systems, the formula is always the same: when the people forget God, their lives will suffer for it, no matter who the man (or woman) is at the top. The solution is not to get the right leaders elected to office, but to convince ourselves, our families, and our neighbors that we are all accountable to a power much higher than ourselves or our government; and that it’s in our best interest to honor that relationship in our behavior.

But what if the people are not interested in that message? Well, God has His own way of getting our attention. And we’re not likely to forget it when He unleashes it.

– David King