

**“Men With Chests”**  
**Grove Presbyterian Church**                      **27 November, 2011**

**Kirkin'o th' Tartan Sunday**

**Lection**

**Mark 15: 42-47**

**When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate wondered if he were already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he had been dead for some time. When he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the body to Joseph. Then Joseph bought a linen cloth, and taking down the body, wrapped it in the linen cloth, and laid it in a tomb that had been hewn out of the rock. He then rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where the body was laid.**

**Reflection**

**Men with Chests**

There are, as C. S. Lewis wrote in his rather quaint way, men with chests and men without chests.

We're talking torsos, not dresser drawers or pirates. Women are included too, but the language there can get a little adolescent.

People without chests. They have the head, brain, thinking. They have a mind for reason, the mark of the cerebral human – us as intellectual being.

And they got the belly, appetite, the mark of the visceral human – us as animal being.

Both mind and belly have merit. And it is good. But where is the chest, the torso, to unite them? To make us go. The heart's blood passion? The lungs pumped with vitality?

People without chests, says Lewis, lack an allegiance to core universal virtues, “the seat of magnanimity,” the truths, the affections, that connect the intellect with the visceral, bringing purpose to both reason and appetite. Lewis, in his essay “The Abolition of Man,” refers to these virtues, these truths as the ‘Tao.’

*“The Chinese also speak of a great thing (the greatest thing) called the Tao. It is the reality beyond all predicates, the abyss that was before the Creator Himself. It is Nature,*

*it is the Way, the Road. It is the Way in which the universe goes on....” – C.S. Lewis, “The Abolition of Man”*

What are these great things, this Tao that precedes and encompasses the universe? You see it in these virtues of the chest:

- ▲ General Beneficence: caring for and preserving humankind
- ▲ Special Beneficence: caring for and preserving the well-being of those to whom we are especially obligated
- ▲ Duties to Parents, Elders, Ancestors
- ▲ Duties to Children and Posterity
- ▲ Justice: treating others with decency, respect, trustworthiness, where they can count on you for good faith and veracity
- ▲ Mercy: upholding the poor, sick, and vulnerable
- ▲ Magnanimity: with all its courage and compassion

I offer to you the Doctor visiting the nursing home who kneeled beside the woman in the wheelchair rather than stand over her and talk down to her.

Joseph of Arimethea finally got tired of a chestless life. A divided life. A life suppressing these great things. A life lacking allegiance. It was time for him to be true to himself by being true to Jesus. Even at great risk, going public as a follower, him a member of the council that indicted Jesus. Honor required him to stop hiding and being safe and pretending. You grow tired of the chameleon life.

Some just don't get it. They'll dismiss Christianity as parochial, provincial, and partisan rather than the enfleshed epitome of universal truth.

This Lewis himself, in his progression from vapid atheism to joyous faith, finally cherished when it dawned on him how Christianity is not a choice among others, “it is the summing up and actuality of them all.”

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Wary the chest-less ones.

The chest-less ones among us ask: It is legal? Is it permissible? What can I get by with? Is it within my rights?

Then there are those who ask: Am I acting with integrity? Am I acting for the greater good? Am I doing right?

*“One hour of life, crowded to the full with glorious action, and filled with noble risks, is worth whole years of those mean observances of paltry decorum, in which men steal through existence, like sluggish waters through a marsh, without either honor or observation.”*

-- Sir Walter Scott

Then I think of the chestless ones booing the First Lady.

No honor. No chivalry. No manhood.

C. S. Lewis warns against a society that debunks an allegiance to these core universal values: *“We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst. We castrate and bid the geldings be fruitful.”*

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You may remember the story of the identical twin boys and the hockey puck. The 11 year old boy hit a three inch puck through a three-and-half inch hole in the board 89 feet away. His prize? The \$50,000 jackpot.

Until Dad said it wasn't right. “It wouldn't be right.” Brother Nick was supposed to take the shot but when his name was called he wasn't around, so brother Nate took the shot. And won. Except it should have been his brother.

It wasn't right, Dad said. So they were ruled ineligible. No \$50,000. Rightfully so.

“We just told them that no matter how much money is involved. It's always best to tell the truth and things will work out,” Dad said.

A lesson in how to be a man.

Said Dad: “I just think that honesty is more important than any prize or money you could get.”

Dad later added, we may have lost the money but the lesson about honesty is priceless.

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For the issue is not changing the world nor the world changing you, but you becoming the change God wants within the world. Your heart, God's heart. Your lungs filled with God's breath. You become the change you hope of others.

For there are those who let the world determine their being (or crush their being), then there are those who bring their new being to bear upon the world.

Christ makes spirituality very practical. He puts skin to the Tao. He makes us examine ourselves. He shows us how to understand what it right in his very person. Truth is not

a mere feeling or subjective sentiment. Truth is reality. Christ is more than true. Christ is truth.

### **Carry On!**

-- by Robert W. Service

It's easy to fight when everything's right,  
 And you're mad with the thrill and the glory;  
 It's easy to cheer when victory's near,  
 And wallow in fields that are gory.  
 It's a different song when everything's wrong.  
 When you're feeling infernally mortal;  
 When it's ten against one, and hope there is none,  
 Buck up, little soldier, and chortle;

Carry on! Carry on!  
 There isn't much punch in your blow.  
 You're glaring and staring and hitting out blind;  
 You're muddy and bloody, but never you mind.  
 Carry on! Carry on!  
 You haven't the ghost of a show.  
 It's looking like death, but while you've a breath,  
 Carry on, my son! Carry on!

**And so in the strife of the battle of life  
 It's easy to fight when you're winning;  
 It's easy to slave, and starve and be brave,  
 When the dawn of success is beginning.  
 But the man who can meet despair and defeat  
 With a cheer, there's the man of God's choosing;  
 The man who can fight to Heaven's own height  
 Is the man who can fight when he's losing.**

Carry on! Carry on!  
 Things never were looking so black.  
 But show that you haven't a cowardly streak,  
 And though you're unlucky you never are weak.  
 Carry on! Carry on!  
 Brace up for another attack.  
 It's looking like hell, but -- you never can tell:  
 Carry on, old man! Carry on!

There are some who drift out in the deserts of doubt,  
 And some who in brutishness wallow;  
 There are others, I know, who in piety go

Because of a Heaven to follow.  
But to labour with zest, and to give of your best,  
For the sweetness and joy of the giving;  
To help folks along with a hand and a song;  
Why, there's the real sunshine of living.

Carry on! Carry on!  
Fight the good fight and true;  
Believe in your mission, greet life with a cheer;  
There's big work to do, and that's why you are here.  
Carry on! Carry on!  
Let the world be better for you;  
And at last when you die, let this be your cry:  
Carry on, my soul! Carry on!