

“More would follow.”
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“Ugly Cross”
Word Count: 750

A preacher began by talking about a retired fellow and how within two months of his retirement he drove his wife nuts, reorganizing her kitchen, restructuring her schedule. She wanted her kitchen back and him out of it! She visited the pastor and pleaded with him to help find her husband something to do. Pastor realized her husband simply was frustrated no longer being top dog. He used to be important. He employed staff who did what he said. He mattered.

What happens when you no longer are important? Many of us relish being important, top dog. Growl and they jump. Part of me likes it. Less likeable is when we are talking about the need to be in control, the pathetic need to be important. Retirement can be a humbling opportunity.

Take note, for the concept of top dogs, alpha males, has been debunked. It has for wolves. The sharpest teeth or toothiest snarl isn't what secures dominance. Wolf packs run in family units. Wolf pack dominance itself is a flawed method, a fallacy. The scientist who first suggested the alpha wolf theory has said he was wrong. The real 'top dog' is based not on bullying and brute dominance but on the family model: Mom and Dad raising pups. Unity, discipline encouraged through the reliable strength of commitment to each other, agreeableness, protection, kindness, affection, generosity, love.

Alpha coaches shy away from the credit and are satisfied seeing their players turn into decent people. Championships are fine, but hardly the purpose of sports. Satisfying to top teachers is seeing their students use their gifts. Who needs headlines honoring you, awards, or framed certificates when you have merited the legacy of history?

Christians, especially this week, might remember how in the eyes of a world afflicted with cataracts and glaucoma, the guy we follow was a failure, a loser, executed alongside two other losers. He didn't win a new BMW for being faithful. We aim for headlines, forgetting it is the judgment of history that tells the real story. Do any of you remember who won the Oscar for best actress or best actor last year? Quick: who won this year's Super Bowl?

Christians this week might remember how we are defined by Easter for Jesus is our Lord not Caesar, a Lord who turns the world upside down: Rejecting self-preservation for other-salvation; That to die is to live; How the last shall be first, and the first shall be last. That'll surprise white supremacists. But, go figure, white supremacists aren't Christians. Better is having something worth fighting for than only fighting against. We are what we love. My Jesus tells us we are most important when we are servants. How scandalous!

How can Christians love this ugly cross? For many, it's decorative costume jewelry, whether the Roman cross, Celtic cross, St. Andrew's cross, Greek cross, Maltese Cross, Coptic cross. The Romans loved crucifixion. That's why they kept the stakes stuck in the ground outside the cities. They crucified to keep the oppressed afraid, to squelch rebellious hatred with efficient and indifferent hatred. Nakedness, helplessness, suffocation, brutality, the disgrace. 6,000 were crucified along the Appian

Way to punish Spartacus' army. 2,000 Jewish revolutionaries were crucified outside Jerusalem when Jesus was a boy. More would follow.

Let's translate the slogan 'Jesus died for our sins' more accurately: My Jesus died on the cross because of our sins. This cross is what we do, again and again, because we prefer our measuring sticks to Jesus'.

Christians this week might remember how the reason for Easter is less about a bus ticket to heaven after you die, less about being spiritually enlightened to experience heaven now. Easter reminds us that this week we too die. Those who put their selfish life first, lose it, and those whose self-centered life dies find true life. Hatreds are selfish, prejudices are selfish. Such sins must die for love to arise. Our Easter reality is our path for resurrection from a cross littered world.

We might remember how we die many times in a lifetime, don't we? Each little death is a coming attraction of the big one. I graduated from High School and those happy days died, shoving me toward someplace new. The bachelor dies when he marries and is reborn a husband. The young woman dies when she gives birth and is reborn a mother. We die when the kids leave home to start their own. Are these deaths worth it? You tell me.