

A Life Worth Remembering

1LT John Robert Fox

During the Second World War, John Robert Fox earned himself a posthumous Medal of Honor – for the sacrifice he made one December day in 1944, when he was thousands of miles from home.

When war broke out, then, he took his commission and joined the 92nd Infantry Division, a segregated division for African-American soldiers that fought with distinction throughout the conflict.

In 1944, he found himself fighting the Nazis in Italy. It was here where, in December of that year, he was tasked to stay behind in the small village of Sommocolonia, in Tuscany. The village had been overrun by Nazis, and Americans were in retreat. Fox found a house to hide in and, from the second floor, he used his radio to contact his colleagues. He called for artillery fire to be directed at the village in order to give the US forces time to retreat, regroup and then launch a counter-attack. Fox even specifically ordered a barrage of fire on his exact position. The gunner who received the message pointed this out to him, assuming it must be some mistake. Fox, however, simply said:

“Fire it. There’s more of them than there are us”

These were the famous last words of a true American hero.

Fox’s act of sacrifice was not in vain. As he planned, the artillery barrage did indeed give his comrades the chance to regroup and launch a successful counterattack. When the US army entered Sommocolonia, they found Fox’s body surrounded by the bodies of around 100 Germans. It wasn’t until 1997 that his bravery was truly recognized, however. President Bill Clinton awarded Fox the Medal of Honor, with his widow, Arlene, picking it up. The citation noted it was awarded for Fox’s “gallant and courageous actions, at the supreme sacrifice of his own life.” He was a true American hero.

We are not slaves. We are not under a dictatorship. We all wish things could be better, but if it were not for the sacrifices of others, things would be a great deal worse.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.
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While there is always an attack, in one form or another, on our rights, we do enjoy relative peace and freedom.

Even if there was not the constant threat of oppression, either from within or without, and everything was good in our lives, we would still have to stand before the Lord and give an account of our lives.

Romans 3:23 All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
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Romans 6:23 The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Because of Jesus, we can now find forgiveness of our sins, hope for our future, and life eternally with Him.

John 10:10 The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

But how did this Gospel, the Good News of redemption get to us? Jesus, the Word Made Flesh, never wrote a book. There's no record of Him writing anything, except the time that He wrote on the ground when the woman was caught in adultery.

Jesus ensured that His message would be communicated and safeguarded not by ink and paper, but by His disciples.

2 Corinthians 3:3 Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

Salvation is based upon faith in Jesus and in His message. His message has been delivered to us through his disciples.

John 17:20 My prayer is not [only for My disciples that are here]. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message.

True leadership and legacy are defined not by what you say about yourself, but what those that come after you say about you.

Almost all of the original disciples died to give us this message except 2: Judas and John. One has a testimony of faith and revelation, the other is a cautionary tale of judgement and destruction.

Judas: Suicide

Exodus 20:13 You shall not commit murder.

Judas murdered himself.

We are not to kill ourselves, but to die to our selfishness.

Matthew 16:24-25 If anyone desires to come after Me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for My sake will find it.

Discipleship won't cost you a lot, it will cost you everything.

Jesus gave us an example to follow. He didn't just tell us to lay down our lives from a safe distance. This wasn't empty philosophical rambling.

Matthew 20:28 The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Jesus: Crucifixion (33 ad)

Stephen (The first Martyr): Stoned to death (While Saul / Paul held the coats and watched in approval)

Acts 7:58 they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

The Apostles

1. **John:** Died of old age, exiled on the island of Patmos
2. **Peter:** Crucified upside down
3. **James, the son of Zebedee:** Executed with a sword, First Apostle to be martyred (44 AD)
4. **Andrew:** Tied to an x-shaped cross
5. **Phillip:** Crucified
6. **Bartholomew / Nathaniel:** Crucified
7. **Thomas:** Stabbed with spears in India (72 ad)
8. **Matthew / Levi:** Beheaded
9. **James, The son of Alphaeus:** Stoned
10. **Thaddeus / Jude:** Chopped
11. **Simon the Zealot:** Chopped

Matthias: Stoned

Acts 1:20 "For," said Peter, "it is written in the Book of Psalms: "'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and, "'May another take his place of leadership.'"

12. **Paul:** Beheaded

1 Corinthians 15:8-10 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

Foxe's Book of Martyrs / DC Talk, Jesus Freaks Vol. 1 & 2

2 Corinthians 4:12 So then, death is at work in us, but life is at work in you.

Tertullian – "Blood of the martyrs is seed for the church"

Revelation 12:11 [Trevor's Paraphrase] The saints overcame satan by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives as being more important than the mission Jesus gave them, even unto death.

Many have scarified their lives so that we can live ours and enjoy certain freedoms. Their sacrifices protect our way of life.

Jesus laid down His life for our redemption and reconciliation to the Father. For our destiny, fulfilment of purpose, and eternity.

As we are observing this Memorial Day, let us remember those that gave it all so that we could have a life, hope, and a future.

Let us also seek God to become like Jesus and sacrifice our selfishness for the good of those in our sphere of influence.

Let us become bold servants that do not love their lives more than people.

He gave it all so that we could have it all, let's pay it forward and give everything for His name and Kingdom's sake.

Matthew 16:24-25 If anyone desires to come after Me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for My sake will find it.

Matthew 5:11-12 Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Luke 6:26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Living for Jesus means dying to your selfishness and anything in your life that conflicts with His kingdom. It means dying to your reputation, comfort, or perceived rights.

I'll take a stand for Jesus, knowing it will cost me my comfort, even if it costs me my life, so that others may come to know and experience His love, truth, and power.

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.

Significance is not found in how high you climb, but in obedience to what you are called to sacrifice.

Sacrifice means saying “yes” to something, and “no” to everything else that competes with it in your life. It means you deny yourself what you want so that you can achieve something great.

Musicians sacrifice time with friends, entertainment, etc., to practice. The last great American novel was written by someone who sacrificed time and energy to write.

It means that we follow Jesus wherever He leads. Even if it's in a fire, I pray for a revelation of Jesus like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Even if it's in a valley of death, I don't have to be afraid because He's with me. If it means being unpopular at school, or ostracized at work for speaking the truth in love, it is the conviction that the Kingdom of heaven is worth infinitely more than the kingdom of me.

Most of us will not be called to physically die for the gospel, but we are all called to die to our selfishness to lay down our lives for His name's sake and for others. To be living sacrifices so that His kingdom can come and will be done.

To sacrifice in prayer to bring heaven to earth. To sacrifice our time in service to others. To sacrifice our preferences so others can benefit. To let death work in us so that life can work in others.

We are called to be living martyrs. A people of sacrifice for so that those that are in darkness can see His light, so our children can have a better future and eternity, so those in prison can find freedom, to give hope to the hopeless and a home to those without family. To turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers.