

Requiescat in Pace – Donald Raymond Krahn

Joshua 1:1-9

Ephesians 2:1-10

John 20:24-31

Don Krahn was a man of action. That is not to say that he wasn't a thinker, wasn't a planner – he was certainly those things as well. But in the final analysis, Don was a doer. Don admired other doers. Something resonated in Don when he saw his peers, his older peers, some years older, step up and act to defend the United States of America. Watching on the sidelines wasn't for him. Don was a man of action. Something moved in his blood, something moved in his bones to get engaged, to step into the fray, to act on his impulse to stand tall with those who could not sit and watch from afar. At 16 years of age, Don joined the fight, the big fight. Don was a doer and World War II pulled at him, his personal constitution compelled him, the gravity of the situation demanded action and at 16 Don joined the fight.

Be strong and courageous. That's what God told Joshua. Joshua would face adversity. Joshua was a warrior. Joshua was called to be steadfast in the spiritual and physical struggle that all of Israel would face. "Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). How many of y'all have faced adversity? Do you know what priceless confidence comes from the knowledge that God is with you when all around you are threatening clouds? Some become paralyzed in frightful situations. We're human. Having been nursed on the Word of God his whole life, Don knew that God was with him. Not because Don himself was so marvelous, but because God is in solidarity with people, because God became man in the person of Jesus Christ (John 1:14).

As a Lutheran, Don was nursed on the pure spiritual milk of grace (1 Peter 2:2-3). Here we come to the great irony of Don's life, the irony of our faith. Grace is something that we don't do anything to achieve. Grace is something that we don't do anything to activate. Grace is a gift. Grace is receiving something you don't deserve and could never earn. Grace is being dead in trespasses and sins and God making us alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:5). To love grace is to be determined NOT to pretend as though you do anything to merit it (Galatians 5:4). Our salvation is God's work, not ours. We receive it, passively, like the life that we possess. None of us contributed to our conception yet here we are, alive.

Don, the man of action, loved the grace of God. Here's how I know. Do you know that feeling of being forgiven? Do you know that feeling of being loved even when you know what a scoundrel you are (and we're all scoundrels)? Have you known, by looking at Jesus on the cross, that He gave His life up for you? Suffered for you... a sinner? Not abstract sins, not hazy bad behavior but real actions that come with a real price. Have you known, by God's Word *known*, that Jesus and His sacrifice took it all away. That the innocent, holy Son of God rendered up His life to save us? That generates gratitude, right?

How many of y'all saw gratitude in Don's life? I did. Those of you who knew him best, who saw him the most, witnessed this virtue in action. Our Lutheran Catechism, in explaining the 8th Commandment (You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor) says that we are to put the best construction on other people's behavior, to speak well of our neighbor and to explain

everything in the kindest way in order to defend our neighbor's reputation. So here's Don, who knows the grace of God, who knows that God has seen all of his sin and acted to take it away and that by virtue of Christ's sacrifice that Don is completely forgiven, so how could Don say an unkind word about anyone else? Some people feign politeness. Some people labor internally not to gossip. Don's nature was to defend his neighbor's reputation. Don loved his neighbor because God first loved him – he knew that love and he was grateful for it and it showed (1 John 4:19).

For a man of action it is a bitter pill to swallow when the body starts revving at lower RPMs. Older people can't do as much. Don's vision wasn't all that great but he loved to drive. For a man of action, giving up the keys is not all that much fun. There's not a single episode of *The Rifleman* (Don's favorite show) where Chuck Connors turns over the reins of his horse to the good lady wife. Pat certainly wasn't the demanding sort. She was butter to Don's toast, cream to his coffee, chocolate syrup and sprinkles to his ice cream. Pat wasn't going ask Don to stop being who he was. Their connection was awfully deep. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:22). Don loved Pat. As a man of action, Don served others, no one more than Pat. A provider; that was Don's calling; that was Don's favorite hat. In our congregation, he served in the choir, on the board of elders, he was the treasurer, the president – he did it all. It was a long run at Christ the King – over 50 years.

Our church service is very deliberately called the Divine Service. Jesus said: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). Our ransom price was the blood of the Messianic King. Jesus is the Man of action. The Lord Christ is the doer of our salvation. Don gladly received what the Lord willed to give. The highest act of faith is to receive what the Lord wills to give. That is what made Don strong, in faith, in life, in service to others – receiving what the Lord wanted to give him. Forgiveness, life, salvation – that's what Christ the King gives. Faith was inextricably intertwined in the fabric of Don's person. A Christian is who he was – morning, noon, night, at home, on the go. Christianity deals with death. Don's body is here. Christianity addresses the fall of man, the death of man, the consequence of sin. Ashes to ashes, dust to dust – those are, for the unbeliever, rather brutal words. Not for Don. Christ is risen. Death couldn't hold the Lord of glory. Beneath the sin of humanity, in Jesus' person, there was a holiness so potent, so defining and authoritative that death had to relinquish the crucified Son of God. "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55) Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). Couple that divine reality with this priceless verse: "If God is for us, who could be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

There's a lightness of heart for the person who knows the power of Easter. There is a good-humor that resides in the soul of the one who knows that death has no sting. There is enough gloom in this world. There is enough self-pity and greed and deceit in this world. That is all darkness. That is all contrary to God's will, contrary to God's nature. Don was a child of the light. Don was fed with the death and resurrection of the Lord of heaven and earth. That made Don cheerful, upbeat, confident, gracious, loving, forgiving, patient, and brave. This body we have is not going to last. Our RPMs are going to wind down. Men of action soon become men of the La-Z-Boy recliner and *The Rifleman* reruns. But faith never fails. Love never fails. The

Good Shepherd tended the sheep that is Donald Raymond Krahn and brought that man of action home.

Be strong and courageous. Those words are for you too. Adversity is never very far from any of us. A funeral is a very good way to become acquainted with death. Death is not our master. Be strong and courageous. “Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.” Be strong and courageous. “And everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?” Don Krahn, the man of action, certainly believed that. Don lived believing it. Don died believing it. That is a testament to the man, a testament to Christianity itself, but most importantly, it is a testament to the Lord of action who claimed Don by His death and resurrection, who claimed Don by Baptism and the Holy Spirit, who claimed Don by grace and faith.