

This is the Day...Tuesday

October 12, 2021

Are You Happy Now?

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” (Philippians 4:8-9)

John Long was a kind, soft-spoken, country gentleman. He always had a smile on his face and always seemed to have an amazing peace about him. He and his family were members of Loray Baptist Church in Gastonia. Over the years Mr. Long held many important positions in the church, from Deacon chair to Sunday School director. He owned a business on Second Avenue in Gastonia, Long’s Meat Packing Company, directly across the street from Lineberger Park. I was never sure exactly what meats Mr. Long packed, but I know that he specialized in packing liver mush. For those of you who are not familiar, liver mush is a concoction of various meats, including liver, formed into a rectangular brick and sealed in airtight plastic. While liver is in the name, there is no liver flavor to liver mush, and there is not better sandwich in all the world than one consisting of fried liver mush. Frequently, as I road past John Long’s Packing Company on the way to Lineberger Park, I would dream of Mom making me my next fried liver mush sandwich the following Sunday after church.

Ironically, I met John Long when I joined the Boy Scouts at Loray Baptist Church. Mr. Long was a dedicated leader and believed in Scouting as a way to train young boys to be young men. I was always amazed when I listened to John Long speak to the scouts. He had a way of teaching us things about life that we would never learn in a book or while earning a badge. As a young, impressionable twelve-year old, I would just soak in his wisdom. One of Mr. Long’s favorite lessons was about happiness. In his soft-spoken but passionate way, Mr. Long would tell us, “If you don’t learn anything else from me, remember, the Lord gives you joy but you have to set your mind to being happy.”

John Long taught me a basic Biblical principle that the apostle Paul also understood. We have joy because of the promised presence of God in our lives each day. God is a promise keeper, and we can joyfully rest on those promises. But we are responsible for our own happiness. Feelings of anger, dissension, and animosity will rob us of any opportunity for happiness. Pride, envy, and greed will destroy your ability to be happy. That is why Paul instructs us to fill our minds and hearts with good things. We should fill our minds with truth, purity, lovely things, and praiseworthy things. These are the things that will bring us happiness. These and a tasty, fried liver mush sandwich.