



Links Players

Simon The Zealot

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:13-14, NIV)

As a golf fanatic for over fifty years, I have witnessed numerous debates over golf topics: Arnie or Jack? Persimmon or Metal? Anchoring or No Anchoring?

But none of these debates ever generated the divisiveness surrounding the current “LIV vs. PGA Tour” controversy. Relationships among golfers who were Ryder Cup teammates a couple of years ago are now filled with acrimony and animosity.

The golf world is a microcosm of where we are today as a nation and society. Part of me is saddened and concerned about what this might mean for us.

Amid this disheartening disunity, I believe hope is abundant. We only need to look at the potential for untold divisiveness created when Jesus began gathering twelve men, among them Simon the Zealot, to be his apostle to see this hope.

We do not know much about Simon the Zealot from Scripture. Beyond being included in four lists of the apostles in the New Testament, nothing more is provided about who he was or what he did—except that his name had the phrase “the Zealot.”

The Zealots were a radical band of Jewish believers who despised the Roman rule that governed their lives. They were a well-known and widely feared outlaw political sect. They were terrorists whose goal was to free Israel from the power of Rome. As his name implies, Simon was a member of this group.

In April, I wrote about Matthew; the tax collector despised and looked down upon by the Jews because he was viewed as collaborating with the enemy. He could have been on every “Wanted” scroll in the Zealots’ meeting rooms. Yet, Jesus consciously brought these two bitter enemies together for three years of intensive teaching and training.

The result was amazing. Both men were able to move beyond their hatred for each other. They could work alongside each other for the development of the Kingdom.

Both men heard, saw, and experienced Jesus' love and grace for them and everyone he encountered. The hatred and divisiveness vanished as these men began spreading the gospel. Jesus knew that the Kingdom of God was more powerful than man's hatred. These two men's transformation provides hope and demonstrates the depth of change that Jesus can bring about in a person's life if our focus is on Jesus and his gospel.

As we approach the upcoming election season, we should consider reflecting on those areas around us where there is division and divisiveness. Can we look to our friends, neighbors, and family members who may have divergent views and opinions on a wide range of controversies and be more forgiving and loving?

Can we take the first step in their direction to demonstrate that we genuinely care about them? Can we attempt to find common ground to build meaningful relationships so that we can share with them that there is the kind of unity that matters in Christ? I pray and encourage you to take that first step in the coming weeks.

Peter summed it up perfectly: "... all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit." (1 Peter 3:8, NASB).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, help us to seek common ground and unity with our friends and family on the critical issues of the day and to show them Christ's love for all of us.

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