



REFLECTIONS

March 3, 2024

Show the wonder of your great love,

Psalms 17:8

If Only...

Those two words precede haunting regrets that fill my memory far too often. High among those regrets is an opportunity I turned away.

I was big enough then to do a man's heavy lifting but at eighteen still burdened with a boy's mind. Pawpaw had been hospitalized for more than two weeks, so maybe I should have instinctively known his time was limited when Munna asked me if I would like to go in to see him. Perhaps because I didn't know what to do or say to him, I said, "I'll see him next time."

There would be no next time.

Several decades passed when a man I didn't know very well told me a personal story:

His name was Richard, the same as mine, and he told me of spending the day with his dying grandmother. He said "We told stories to each other. We laughed, we cried, and we hugged each other."

I must have unknowingly expressed surprise at their freedom to talk of death at such a time because he looked me square in the eye and said:

"You need to tell people how you feel about them while they're *alive*! Too often you see someone in the cemetery talking to the ground and it's too late then." Then he softly repeated, "You need to tell them how you feel while they are *alive*."

And he held on to that last word as only a Mississippi man could, and his passion still rings in my ears today.

Richard was a shining light to me that day. I praise God for his example of how to say goodbye to someone very dear.

Since then, I learned still another lesson.

I don't remember Pawpaw ever telling me that he loved me, but at every opportunity he showed his love by taking me with him as he went about his day. If only I had chosen to see Pawpaw that day, I believe he would have felt my love by just being with him. Nothing more.

"You are the light of the world,"

Richard +

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