

Another Pondering from Bishop K.L. Ackerman

“I think George knew what he was doin”

In the late 1950's my Dad told me to go over to a man who had scared me for years. "Old Rube" was a drunk. He sat next to the railroad tracks in McKeesport Pennsylvania, my home town, and he begged for money, booze and scraps of food. The local bakery gave him left overs, and he drank his Ripple wine from a bottle inside a paper bag. He was simply a part of the landscape, and people avoided him.

My father was a very kind man and I trusted him - so with trepidation I approached Rube with the question my father told me that I could ask - since it was one that had rolled around inside my baseball mind for years. "Did Babe Ruth really predict that he would hit that home run when he pointed to the outfield?" Why would I ask that of one of the dregs of society? He was the bum who scared children and aggravated the people in town, with his stinking overcoat and rotten breath. But James "Rube" Parnham had a history. He had had a wife and four children. He had a baseball career in Baltimore with the promise of a great future. He played with Babe Ruth. But the death of his wife and children in an automobile accident in which he blamed himself dragged him into the abyss of no runs, no hits, many errors, and no wins. He was a pitcher on the move one moment and a drunk with no future in the next.

As I asked him that question with great fear and only with trust in my father, Rube slurred words that I remember as if it were yesterday, "Yeah, I think George knew what he was doin'. He might have been an S.O.B., but he was a _____ good player."

Every day we see people in the streets - landscape at their best, for some, and trophies for those who want to be commended for their charity, but the Rube's of this world have a history. They have a story to tell, They have answers to unanswered questions. But, they will not seek you out. You must go where they are, discover who they are, and take Christ to them. But in the end - they may share Christ with you. You cannot out give God; you just need to trust your Father, who will give you the words to say.

I am proud of my son, who has dedicated his life to finding Rube.