



Whenever the passage we heard from Second Corinthians comes up, it should serve as an invitation for all of us to consider our fellow members of the body of Christ who have impacted our faith journey for the better. So, I want to tell you about a man named Wren. First of all, before I met him, I never knew a person who could actually be called Wren. I think by that time, I knew it was possibly a bird, but I never knew someone with that name, and really haven't since. All the more of a reminder, still to this day, that Wren was one of a kind in my life. The first thing you must know about him is that he was Arkansas to the core. His voice almost made you feel like you were being drawn into southern comfort and hospitality. Like you were about to sit on your rocking chairs on the front porch with sweet tea or an actual adult beverage and overlook others' comings and goings. Usually, those moments would involve sharing stories about each other's lives, but Wren was not wired to share too much about his most incredible journey, one that could most certainly be composed into a best-selling book. Nevertheless, some members of the body of Christ just are not interested in letting you know all they've done. They just do the needed work and move on.

One of those stories about Wren that forever shaped his own life was his time in the military during World War II. He and members of his unit were brought front and center standing in line, and the commanding officer pointed at some of the men, including one standing right next to Wren, who would go out the next day. Unfortunately, none of those selected returned, as they were all killed in action. Wren would wrestle the rest of his life, "Why them, and not me?" Who knows how much that drove him into doing his needed part in the body of Christ with persistence and dedication, as if he needed to take full advantage of the opportunity in still having a life at all?

But again, he wasn't interested in the glory of it all. And the encapsulation of that for Wren was none other than on the football field. Some of us even younger fans of the game know the names of the famous quarterbacks over the years, like Bart Starr and Johnny Unitas and Joe Montana, among others. But before all of them, there was Y.A. Tittle, considered one of the greatest in the 1950's. In college, he played at Louisiana State University, where he received a fair amount of accolades and fame, as many of the great quarterbacks do, still to this day. However, in order to do their jobs, they need people in front, protecting them from monstrous pass rushers. Such offensive linemen in the game of football hardly ever receive their due credit for doing what is essential for anything good to come from the rest of the team. One of those men for Y. A. Tittle to have any success whatsoever at LSU was none other than Wren himself: paving the way for recognizing that on the playing field of God's grace and love and mercy galore, where we as the body of Christ go to work for others, we aren't so interested in the glory, but giving the glory to God for making any field in life possible to enjoy at all.

Now by the time I met Wren, he was well advanced in years. His football playing career, not to mention his service in the military, took their toll on his knees, and so he got around with a cane, not being able to do nearly as much around the church as he would have liked. And yet, Wren still very much played a pivotal role in the body of Christ during his elderly years. For me, it was during congregational gatherings, as we sat around these circular tables spread throughout the fellowship hall. As I was still getting used to doing the whole pastor thing in trying to visit with as many people as possible, Wren would have me sit down and relax with his good 'ole southern charm and hospitality. He had a way about him that even though he had stories to take up your entire evening, he made sure you felt as if you were the center of God's entire universe with his essential doses of

laughter and sense of humor, as if he was doing God's work of unleashing grace and new life, all while he was just sitting down at a table.

Whenever this Second Corinthians passage comes up, it should invite us to take time to think of our own Wren's in our life, the people we often take for granted, who have impacted our relationship with God and the church for the better. The Wren's in our life who made us love God and God's children even more than we thought was possible. The Wren's in our life who are never interested in the glory of their work, but only giving glory to God, and making us feel as if we are worth the glory of God's grace and love and mercy galore. And, lest we forget, God is more than capable of still working through us through all the years of our life, no matter what. And so for the entire body of Christ, past, present, and those still to come, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!