

The Bottom Line Of Life

- Ken Weliever, 'The Preacher's Word' -

My wife, Norma Jean, likes to watch Hallmark movies. I suppose I've developed a bit of fondness for them as well. Currently, we're watching their annual Christmas series.

When the movie begins with friction between the two-lead male and female characters, I always turn to Norma and say, "Well, we know how this is going to end." Even if one of them has a current boyfriend or girlfriend, something will happen to reveal this person was wrong for them. And the newfound love or in some cases, a rekindled relationship from High School is their true love.

Obviously, the movies are popular, even if the plot is predictable. Maybe it's because we like predictable. We like a positive outcome. A certainty to the future. A happy forever after ending. Yet, we know real life is not like that.

In today's Bible reading, John 21, Jesus reminded the apostles Peter and John of that fact.

After Jesus' familiar encounter with Peter asking, "Do you love me?" Jesus offered this insight into Peter's future.

"I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish" (Jn. 21:18)

I have to chuckle when reading this verse. I used to playfully tease my Mom with it. It became a joke between us. Sure enough, in the last years of her life as she fought multiple myeloma, she spent time in the hospital, rehab, and in our home. Once I took her on a trip to her native Kentucky that she never would or could have done on her own.

We all wonder, what will life be like as we grow older? Or will we live to a ripe old age? Or will Jesus come before we die a natural death? Where will we

live? What will life be like? How will we die? Will I contract COVID-19? Will I live alone?

Those are questions that none of us know. The ending is not like a Hallmark movie. We do know this. "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27).

When Peter heard Jesus' future prediction, he immediately asked, "What about John?" Jesus' response is classic. "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" (Jn. 21:22).

In other words, Jesus is telling Peter "Don't worry about John. It's none of your business. You just focus on following Me."

This text, while a slight sidebar to John's overriding theme, "That you may believe," offers us some wise counsel and sobering introspection.

Like Peter, many of us wonder and even worry about what will happen to other people. Sometimes, we complain about our lot in life by comparing it to someone who we feel is luckier than we are. Or getting all the breaks. Or receiving more of God's blessings. Like Israel of old we may find ourselves murmuring, "The way of the Lord is not fair" (Ezek. 18:29). Yet, who are we to criticize God and question His will?

Jesus bluntly says, "What's it to you? It's none of your business."

So many variables impact the future. Our environment. Heredity. Nature. Nurture. The external political, economic and social environment in which we live. Our personal choices. And not the least of which is the overriding providence and will of God.

The old cliché while it may be overused, is still true. "I know not what the future hold, but I know who holds the future."

The bottom line of life?

Jesus says it simply and succinctly. "Follow Me."

(A few additional thoughts. Perhaps one reason for the popularity of those Hallmark

Movies is they are clean. One will not hear four letter words, no embarrassing bedroom scenes or some type of sexual innuendo. Unfortunately, this year marks the first time a homosexual relationship is fundamental in a movie story line. Time will tell if those Hallmark Movies remain as pure and innocent as they have been. Good wholesome entertainment is hard to find on the television but a lot of people will watch it when available.

My mom loved these movies. I don't know how many times she would watch the same movie, having forgotten she had already watched it, and say how good that movie was. For me it brings back the memories of mom and dad as they had their own love story. Perhaps not as simple or perfect as a Hallmark Movie but during the Christmas season our house had a tree and outside decorations. The common denominator of those movies is love finds a way as we learned in our home. – Dennis Tucker)