

Sermon May 29, 2011 Advocates for the orphaned: Hattie's Boys

Good Morning, My name is Andy Lefko, and I am a proud member of Sgt. Jones Bradbury Camp #149, Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War.

As I have read, Jesus said to his disciples, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever." Jesus was speaking to his disciples just before his ascension to Heaven. In this Gospel reading, he was trying to bolster their spirits for what he knew would be a difficult journey of converting and creating new disciples. He said, "I will not leave you orphaned", and he tells them that the "spirit of truth", God's word, and love will always be with them. This is also the same chapter when Jesus reminds his disciples that he is the way, the truth, and the light, and that no one can enter the kingdom of God without believing in him.

If we were to look down upon these pews, 150 years ago, one would see the family of Richard Smith and Elizabeth Beach Smith and the workers and laborers of the mills that dotted Chester Creek. The Smiths probably read this passage in preparation for their life's work, bringing wayward souls into the kingdom of God. Advocates for the orphaned. Being a local mill owner, Richard Smith knew the spiritual need of his workers, and in the early 1830's, his wife and daughters were the teachers for Sunday School classes in the upper room of Smith's Nail factory. The power of the Holy Spirit must have been working well within the Smiths, because their success had created a problem, the room wasn't big enough for their growing numbers.

Richard Smith, therefore began the process of creating the beautiful church that you worship in today.

But why do we soldiers in blue and ladies in hoop skirts come among you today? We are drawn to history. Many of you probably are too. I have enjoyed learning about my own genealogy and as I have become more involved with our organization, learning about Jones Bradbury has been fascinating.

Some of you here, may have heard the name, Jones Bradbury, but most probably have not. In the late 1850's he might have sat there, or maybe over there. He was a 24 year old, weaver and self professed sinner. He and a friend, John Newsome were young men, who probably did what young single men do, they probably drank too much alcohol, gambled, swore and probably did not follow too many of the 10 commandments. But for some reason, they both began going to Harriet and Clementina Smith's Sunday School Class. We don't know why they began going, one could speculate, were they worried about their place in the afterlife, or were these two Sunday school teachers too pretty to turn down? Either way they kept coming, were eventually confirmed and took their first holy communion.

It is hard to believe that these two young women, of fairly high social status would spend their time converting sinners in the upper room of a nail factory. We do know that they were well off. They had a large house in Philadelphia and in the summer when the city was too hot, they came to Rockdale to escape the heat. We also know that the Smiths were friends with the Croziers and Duponts, so they were doing pretty well financially and socially. Think about this, these two girls could have been the Paris Hiltons of their day, spoiled and thinking only of their own entertainment. In today's world they would have been perfect candidates for their own reality tv show. Thankfully for Jones, John and the other men and women of this area, they weren't society mavens, they were disciples of Jesus and they were serious about being advocates for the orphaned.

So Jones became a member of the Episcopal Church and began teaching Sunday School himself. However, tragedies began to occur in Jones's life. His older brother was mentally unstable and committed suicide, and in 1861, his father died. Unfortunately, Jones, for whatever the reason, felt as though he is was not worthy of being saved, and that he could not help but fall back into sin. This may seem strange to us, most people today lack the faith to believe, he believed, but lacked faith in himself, that he was worthy of God's gift to him.

As personal tragedy struck the Bradbury family, the country as a whole was imploding into civil war. Jones, John Newsome and many other men from Rockdale, enlisted into the Union army. Some fighting to preserve the Union, and some to put an end to slavery. Jones and John joined Co. B of the 26<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment. Jones and John got lucky at the beginning of the war, Company B was detailed away from the rest of the regiment to guard supplies in Washington. It was there in Washington that in August of 1862, Harriet and Clementina visited their favorite Sunday School boys. How do we know this much detail about these obscure individuals? As was the case in Victorian America, Clementina was an avid letter writer and her usual partner was Sophia Dupont, the wife of Admiral Samuel Dupont. Many of these letters are at the Hagley Museum and were used by Anthony Wallace to write a book called, Rockdale, The Growth of an American Village in the Early Industrial Revolution. In addition to this we have information from Rev. John K. Murphy, Rector of your church in the late 1850's and into the 1860's.

Back to our two soldiers, eventually Co. B was sent to the front and joined the regiment in time for the Battle of Fredericksburg in December of 1862. The regiment was not directly involved in the fighting, so they missed the horror of other union soldiers who gallantly charged "the stonewall" at the base of Mayre's Heights.

After the battle the regiment went into winter quarters and then in the spring of 1863, they were heavily engaged in saving the union army at the Battle of Chancellorsville. It was there that the two were separated, John Newsome was wounded in the leg and then captured. Eventually he was exchanged and went back to Philadelphia to recuperate. He would not return to the regiment until the spring of 1864, when he was promoted to Lt. and married. While recuperating, he married Miss Elizabeth Murphy, sister of Rev. John Murphy.

While John was recuperating and wooing the Recotor's sister, Harriet and Clementina were busy still working their magic converting wayward souls to believers, but they also volunteered at the various hospitals in Philadelphia. There is no doubt that these young ladies were dedicated to serve all of God's children and to meet them at a place of need, not just when it suited them.

As for Jones, he was about to be a part of the most dramatic battle ever held on American soil. In July after a long and arduous foot march from Virginia, Jones' regiment arrived in Gettysburg and as 56,000 Americans were killed or wounded, Jones survived. He was in the thick of the battle on July 2<sup>nd</sup>, being at the far right of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Corps line which was flanked and forced to fall back. But eventually they held and forced the Confederates back. So for Jones, he was 2 for 2, meaning, he was in two major battles and had not been wounded. Unfortunately, his luck would not hold out. After the Union victory at Gettysburg, the union army would attempt to flank the confederates back in Virginia but it never seemed to work, and while attempting to flank them again at Mine Run, Jones was wounded in the foot, which doesn't seem like a bad injury, but seeing how the infantry could march 15 miles a day, a foot injury was bad. So bad that he went to the hospital and was eventually transferred to Philadelphia in the winter of 1863. He was in the hospital for 3 months and came out prematurely

gray, and was able to stay with the Smiths in Philadelphia for a while until he had to return to his regiment.

In March of 1864, Jones does a fascinating thing, he reenlists for the remainder of the war. He could have just stayed home. He had done his fair share, why not let someone else take his place. But I don't think Jones was one to let others do his work. One would think that he probably had read Lincoln's immortal words at Gettysburg in November of 1863, **"It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.**

In the spring of 1864, Jones and the 26<sup>th</sup> PA Infantry were fighting the rebels at The Wilderness in VA, Spottsylvania Courthouse, North Anna and in June he was captured near Mechanicsville, VA and sent to the infamous Andersonville Prison in Georgia. The horrors of any wartime prison are terrible, but Jones once again miraculously survived the prison where 13,000 men lost their lives. Somehow, he is exchanged due to poor health in late winter of 1865 and recuperated in March. He had numerous conversations with Rev. Murphy about the horrible conditions of starvation, sanitation and mistreatment of prisoners by the rebel guards.

Many men, John Newsome included, could no longer stay in the army due to their wounds, and as Jones was captured in June, John got his honorable discharge and settled down with his new wife.

The friends must have spent time together in March as Jones was recuperating, but sometime in March, Jones went back to the war.

Can you believe it.

Wounded, Captured, why would he go back? By this time he must have known that it was only a matter of time till the end of the war. Lee was bottled up at Petersburg, Va, Sherman had just completed a march from Atlanta to Savannah and then burned the capital of South Carolina and

was moving into North Carolina. Jones could have faked illness and stayed at home.

But that obviously was not in him. He had signed on for the duration of the war and he had to go back. This time many of the men of his old regiment had not reenlisted and had gone home. Of the men who did reenlist, they moved to another Philadelphia regiment, the 99<sup>th</sup> PA Infantry. In April, members of my great-great grandfather's 5<sup>th</sup> corps had crushed the rebels at a battle called Five Forks, which forced General Lee to evacuate Petersburg and Richmond. This meant that the rebels were on the run and Jones and the Union armies were on the chase. Jones' regiment caught up with the rebs at Saylor's creek not far from Appomattox. Jones was a sergeant leading his men and it was in that pursuit that the fate that had eluded him in so many battles, caught up with him and he was mortally wounded and taken to a field hospital where we pick up the story with Clementina's letter to Sophia,

"We all feel very deeply Jones's death, he was killed on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April while leading his company in a charge. He survived only two hours, a pencil note came to dear Hattie yesterday written with great effort, while he was dying, the paper stained with his blood. We have the blessed hope that he has entered into everlasting life and spared the conflict with sin so dreadful to him."

Three days later, the war ended.

Harriet and the Smiths helped Jones' mother Lavinia attain a mother's army pension. Jones's body was shipped to Rockdale and Harriet waited for 6 trains until he finally arrived. It is through the Rev. Murphy Memorial Service Sermon that was published and we were finally able to secure a copy from the Duke University Library, that we found out even more about Jones. But on May 7, 1865, Jones was buried next to his father Mathew about 20 feet from the churches front door.

After Jones's death, his friend John Newsome took his growing family and bought a farm in Iowa where he died in 1905.

The Smiths continue their work for Christ. Clementina and Harriet never married and they died in 1888 and 1905. All the Smiths are buried here.

Now this is a rather sad ending, but this type of ending is what Memorial Day is all about. Remembering those who died in battle or during war time. This day of remembrance was started by the forerunner of my group.

The Grand Army of the Republic declared that on May 30, we should set aside this day to place flowers on the graves of those men who died in battle. That is why we are here.

This man, Jones Bradbury, and so many like him, gave all they had, their lives, so that we, as a nation, can live the type of lives we enjoy today. We speak today of "The Greatest Generation", men like my grandfather, who fought in World War 2 and to a generation of people who sacrificed so much to defeat Germany and Japan from taking over the world. But had Jones and his companions not won the Civil War, what would the 1940's have looked like? Without "One Nation, Under God", would slavery have continued into the 1940's? Would it have spread to the west? So many what if's. What if Jones would have survived to have a family? However, this is one "what if" I do know the answer too. Was Jones saved? The Smiths in their Christian charity and love, saved him and so many more. For as it was written in Psalms 66 that was read today,

9

For you, O God, have proved us; \*  
you have tried us just as silver is tried.

10

You brought us into the snare; \*  
you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.

11

You let enemies ride over our heads;  
we went through fire and water; \*  
but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.

12

I will enter your house with burnt-offerings  
and will pay you my vows, \*  
which I promised with my lips  
and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.

To paraphrase John 3:16, all you have to do is believe in him and you will have everlasting life. Jones might have fought his own demons, but he had to be a believer, so I know he is with our Savior, because Jones, just like Jesus, was not afraid to die for another man's sins.

Amen