

The Life of St. Patrick

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St. Patrick was a real man, whose life wasn't about drinking green beer, finding little leprechauns, searching for that pot of gold under the rain bow or driving snakes from Ireland. But he was a great evangelist who helped the Irish people find Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Born in Scotland as Maewyn Succat around 385 AD, he later changed his name to Patrick. But as a youth, he lived an affluent lifestyle of the nobility. When Patrick was 16, Irish raiders kidnapped him from his family's estate and took him to Northern Ireland as a slave. It was there that he looked after his captor's sheep and goats.

After six years, he had a spiritual dream and was told him that he would be going home by ship. As a result, he ran away and walked some 200 miles where he found passage to Britain on a ship. After an adventuresome ship's journey, Patrick made his way home.

But he also had another spiritual dream and it was a message inviting him back to Ireland to share the Gospel and sure enough, he did return. But in the 20-year interval, he studied for the ministry and had become a missionary bishop.

When we look at Patrick's life, we can learn that life is often hard and we need to stay faithful. Though none of us have gone through the turbulent times that Patrick went through, I am sure our lives have had its share of rough patches.

In the film *A League of Their Own*, Dottie Hinson, the star catcher for the Rockford Peaches, decided to quit the team just before the first game of their World Series. Her manager, who squandered the last five years of his major-league career through drinking, confronted her and said, "Quit now and you'll regret it for the rest of your life". She responded "It just got too hard." The manager said, "It's supposed to be hard, if it wasn't hard, everyone would do it. The hard is what makes it great."

The Apostle Paul wrote in Romans 5:3-4, "**We glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope.**"

When you think about it, rejoicing in suffering sounds ludicrous, but if we believe it is God ordained and there is a reason, then we can endure it. So, let me encourage us to lean into the Lord when the hardships come and not run.

Patrick was an ordinary person who served an extraordinary God. We serve the same God who used an ordinary man to do extraordinary things.

As a captive, Patrick watched over the sheep in the rugged cold, where he learned to pray and his faith grew. Even though he was unsure if he would ever return home, he trusted that God would see him through. And God will see us through our trials.

When Patrick stepped ashore the second time as a missionary-bishop, the hostile "Druids" made his life difficult. He was threatened with bodily harm and murder. He was slandered and accused of many things. He was under the constant cloud of arrest. But he didn't melt with fear because he knew God was with him and of the promise of heaven that awaited him. A good attitude for us as well.

The **Joy of the Lord** was his strength and because of Christ living in his heart, he refused to back down and stood up to his accusers, because he had a higher calling and his focus was on making disciples for Jesus Christ.

Life is never straight and easy, but we are to expect the bumps in the road and the detours. But what comes our way, we need to remain faithful, no matter what.

The Second lesson is to trust in God's Plan.

If Patrick had not been kidnapped and taken to Ireland as a slave, it is unlikely that he would have gone back to Ireland as a missionary. But the Lord had special plans for Patrick and the Irish people just as he has plans for all of us.

Several thousand years before Patrick was kidnapped, there was a 17-year-old Hebrew named Joseph who was sold by his own brothers into slavery where he was taken to Egypt. He was falsely accused and put into prison for many years, but the Lord was with him, and Joseph Pharaoh's dream and was later placed in a position to save thousands of people from a famine.

For all of us, God has a plan for our lives. Often the Lord enacts his will even when we have no idea what that plan is, but we must trust and accept what God wills.

The third lesson is to step out in faith.

History records for the next 30 years, Patrick took the gospel to places where no one had gone and because of his dedication, the Irish people heard the gospel and they responded.

To explain the Christian faith, Patrick used a common symbol of Ireland and that was the shamrock. It was a wild plant that grew everywhere. With three separate leaves, Patrick taught there is one God in three persons, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

If Patrick were with us today. He might use this water in three forms yet is still water. Water is a liquid. Water is a solid and water is a gas. So God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If Patrick went to Shaw's and purchased a flower, the Father would represent the green stems. The Son would be the white rose and the red tulip and the Holy Spirit would represent the beauty and fragrance of these plants.

With regard to the Godhead, they are all one. Their glory is equal, their majesty is co-eternal. Each one participated part and parcel of what the others did. There is an eternal, undivided fellowship while each is separate while all is one.

What made Patrick unique was that he used the common things of life to teach others about God and he would do the same with us.

On this St. Patrick's Day while dressed in green and we eat our corn beef and cabbage dinner, let us be inspired at what Patrick had accomplished, knowing the God desires to work through us to comfort others in their hardships. When we share our faith through prayers, good deeds or an aptly spoken word, may we do it with the courage of St. Patrick.

Here is a prayer that is called St. Patrick's Breastplate.

I arise today, through
God's strength to pilot me,
God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me,
God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me,
God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me,
God's shield to protect me,

God's host to save me
From snares of devils,
From temptation of vices,
From everyone who shall wish me ill,
afar and near.

Christ with me,
Christ before me,
Christ behind me,
Christ in me,
Christ beneath me,
Christ above me,
Christ on my right,
Christ on my left,
Christ when I lie down,
Christ when I sit down,
Christ when I arise,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone who speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through belief in the Threeness,
Through confession of the Oneness
of the Creator of creation.

God bless you all.

