

It Happened in the Fall

It was late October and the leaves had just started to turn in the small rural community of Smithers Valley. The weather was pleasant, and folks were preparing for their annual fall festival. But amidst the pumpkin gathering and autumn decorating, there was a somber task to be done. Wilbur Stanley, a life-long member of the Smithers community had died and his funeral was today. As the hearse pulled into the cemetery, only a couple of cars followed and that was to be expected. You see, Wilbur was one of the most despised people in Smithers. He had spent his life dealing other folks misery, one of the meanest, stingiest and foul mouthed fellas you'd ever meet. Children feared him, adults hated him and for the most part, everyone gave Wilbur a good lettin'-alone.

Just a month ago, Wilbur discovered he had a fast growing cancer and his time was short. He had gone to see the preacher, talked and studied the bible, made the good confession, then being baptized in Upton Creek. Those that heard of Wilbur's conversion scoffed at the idea, saying he'd waited to the last minute to attempt to be a decent human being. Many doubted he'd been sincere and had just taken out some "fire insurance" in hopes of missing hell. Most thought it was a slap in the face to those who had lived decent lives and contributed to the good of Smithers Valley. Even after his repentance, folks still detested old Wilbur.

Jesus told a story about some workers who went to work in a vineyard. Some were hired early in the day, while others came to work in the late evening. Despite the complaints of the early workers, those that came last received the same pay. (*Matthew 20:1-16*) He concluded the story by saying, "*So the last will be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few chosen.*" (*Matthew 20:16*) We must never begrudge the "last hour" Christian, but rather rejoice at their obedience and their acceptance of the saving grace of God given to all men through Jesus Christ. Even those like Wilbur Stanley.

Jay Launius – 2021

Maud church of Christ

Maud, Texas