

Glenn Samuel Martin, Sr. Philippians 3:7-11



We pause today to celebrate, to mourn, and to remember. We gather to honor the life of Glenn Samuel Martin, Sr.—a man who filled the roles of husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather, friend, farmer, gardener, surveyor, deacon, and many things besides, a man who pressed on.

Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is a time for every purpose under heaven, and this is a time for remembering. It is a time for thinking about Glenn and his investment in our lives. It is also a time for reflecting on our own sense of loss and grief at his passing. We celebrate his life and legacy, rejoicing in his stature, character, and the gift of his love. Our celebration, however, is mingled with the sorrow of our loss. Even as we rejoice that Glenn is in a better place, we grieve that our own lives seem somehow diminished with his passing.

Glenn's was a life of dedication, investment, and hard work. He believed in the value of hard work, with little concern for heat of the day. He did not bother rising early to beat the heat, he just worked through it. Not long back, Glenn needed some help with a farm project. Another man known as a hard worker was contracted to give a hand. After a grueling day's work with Glenn, he reported, "I'd 'a' hate for him to have been 20 years younger, working me. I don't think I could 'a' took it."

Hard work was not something he shunned. He took pride in his work. He took pride in raising his dark tobacco. He took pride in tending his garden and making things grow. Glenn "loved to raise a pile of garden to give away." He taught his children and grandchildren the value of work. "Tend to your business." He wanted them to protect the investment of their time, energy, and effort by following through. "You start something, you're going to finish it."

From his hospital bed, he spoke of tending to the garden's planting, making sure the crops were in at the right time. He knew what needed to be done and encouraged others to do it correctly. Over the last 10 years he consistently brought home ribbons from the fair by the handful. My own feeble attempts at a garden found a resource in Glenn. He not only told me when to plant cabbage, but purchased the slips, brought them by, and helped me get them in the ground.

Glenn fed the community, taking from his bounty to share freely with everyone. His generosity went beyond vegetables and advice, though. He found a way to help any facing financial needs as well. He had a smile for everyone, and a few dollars to share with anyone who asked. He kept a record of loans, but never referred to them again. He looked upon those loans as investments in others, trusting God for the results.

Glenn invested in people and he invested in the community. He was a charter member of the Evergreen Ruritan club, serving as its treasurer for 30 years. He was also a lifelong member of Rocks, joining at age 12 along with Helen Inge. At revival every year, he brought the Ruritan members with him one night, merging his church and community involvement.

Glenn was an active member at Rocks. He sat with Ophelia just under the clock. It was only the last couple of months while he was in the hospital that you would notice his absence. Aside from illness, he would be absent with Ophelia to attend a homecoming at her church in Buckingham. He was faithful in his presence, as well as in his service at Rocks. A member for 73 years, he served for 54 as a deacon, and 35 as a trustee.

He desired to see all his friends and family in church. He found something of as great a value here as he did in his hard work and sharing produce from his garden. Faith made every day a pretty day for Glenn. He enjoyed life as an opportunity to enjoy God's creation, watching an aiding in growth, and welcoming others as friends.

On February 10, 1943, Glenn and Ophelia went to the parsonage to be married at age 22. For 63 years and a month, they lived together, sharing their joys, their loves, their resources, their dreams, and their faith.

As Glenn sat just under the clock on that wall for years, so even in the hospital bed he wanted to know what time it was. Today we gather sharing some concern with Glenn over the time. It is a confusing time. It is a time of grief and a time of joy. It is a time of celebration and pain. It is a time of remembering and taking leave.

This gentle, quiet, hard-working, steadfast man we knew and love has finally left this life. We will miss him dearly. Glenn's life was about leaving behind those things that did not matter in order to hold onto what was truly important. He let go of wealth and entertainment to invest in friends and family. He let go of self in order to make his life pleasing to God. In Paul's words, "I have suffered the loss of all things that I might gain Christ." So now, Glenn lies before us, leaving all behind, resting in the arms of Christ Jesus, his Lord and Savior.

Paul's words spoke of a future reality. That future is now Glenn's present.

So now it is time for us to say "Good-bye" to Glenn, even as Glenn experiences the hope for which he lived. May we share in his hope of reunion with Christ Jesus. It was Glenn's desire to see all his friends and family in church. More importantly, it was to reunite with friends and family on the other side of eternity with Christ Jesus.

—Christopher B. Harbin