

## Raymond Anderson Moore

### Philippians 3:12-16



We gather here to celebrate the life of Raymond Moore. We gather to honor his contributions to the lives of many, as well as to take leave of a father, grandfather, husband, brother, and friend. We mourn in his passing, for he has left a hole in many lives he has touched in his living and in his dieing.

Paul's words that we read today were written from prison. In the midst of suffering and affliction, Paul writes of a higher calling and focus for life. His words speak to living for more than ourselves. We might expect him to give more attention to his own needs and discomfort, but his words focus on meeting the needs of others, and challenging them to live according to higher standards.

Raymond's death was a shock to many. As life so often brings us unexpected turns and events, so the occasion and means of Raymond's death took us by surprise. We should not be so surprised at life's turns, yet we delude ourselves of a stability in life that is tenuous at best. We imagine life predictable, when it is all too uncertain.

Raymond learned hard work during summers on his grandfather's farm. He learned to appreciate the outdoors and the effort involved in maintaining and fostering the growth and maintenance of life.

For Raymond, life was about stewardship. He studied forestry and forest product manufacturing due in large part to interests in conserving life and balance in this world of God's creation. He knew that we are here on earth for a limited time, and he strove to preserve the beauty and balance of the world in which he lived.

Raymond was gifted with a sly wit. His gruff exterior could cause some to label him a curmudgeon, yet there was much more to Raymond than this rough external bark. He was a man of strong opinions and ideas. He held strongly to them, for he was knowledgeable and secure in his stance. He was not above accepting his limitations, however.

When he more recently bought a new chainsaw, he told Rich of a problem with getting it cranked. Faced with the fact that he simply no longer had the strength to start it, he responded with, "Do you want a new chainsaw?"

Raymond had high standards for others, but he held to the same standards for his own life, as well. He was attuned a higher standard of behavior and ethics. He was likewise attuned to appreciate beauty.

Raymond found beauty in nature and dreamed of a pond on his tree farm. Raymond took in the beauty around him and transposed passages into needlework

expressions. The gruff man with a biting wit appreciated artistic creativity. He was a man who loved his goats, often carrying around the kids as others might carry kittens.

Raymond was not much on religious ceremony and traditions. In part, he was simply dismayed at the failure of the church to live according to the standards of the gospel. In a community with a history of poor race relations, he stood against denigration of others. He wanted to teach a better way to live and higher standards of conduct. Life was not something to take for granted, but an opportunity for service as stewards of God's gifts.

Raymond understood life as a gift on loan. He wanted to make contributions to the lives of others. He wanted to leave something of worth behind him after his passing. He wanted his life to count for more than consumption. He strove to be of benefit to others as a steward of God's creation and gift of life.

He strove to create things of beauty and durability. In ways akin to Paul's words in Philippians, he did not consider that he had finished all there was to do. He looked ahead to doing more to ease the life of others, preserve forests for future generations, and impact people in positive ways. He was a faithful steward of life, trying to give something of greater value to those who would come behind.

Paul spoke of this attribute of stewardship and future thinking. He challenged others by example to look beyond ourselves to our calling as stewards before God. Paul set Christ Jesus before himself as the example to emulate in all things. As Raymond, Paul had higher standards for himself and others. Paul could appreciate the blessings of God's creation, looking to a higher purpose in life than living merely for self.

As Raymond clung to his understanding of life's higher ideals, Paul challenges us to reach for those higher ideals—the ideals of God in Christ Jesus.

As we look to Raymond's life for his contributions to family, students, and friends, may we find a challenge to live for more than our own issues and petty dreams. Raymond never saw his pond completed. In some sense that is a loss for him. At the same time, he built for us and for others something of greater worth and longer impact—and example of living for more than self.

May we take courage this evening in letting go of our pettiness and over-indulged self worth. May we lay down our own self-served importance with the grace to live for a higher calling. May we take the challenge of Paul to lay all aside to allow the grace and gospel of Christ Jesus become reality in our lives.

As we miss and grieve for Raymond, let him challenge us to be more than we would be otherwise.

*—Christopher B. Harbin*