



Charlestown United Protestant Church



Reaching Out with God's Love, Celebrating Life in Jesus Christ.

A Newsletter for Friends and Residents of the Charlestown Retirement Community

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At the Olympic Games in Paris in 1924 the sport of canoe racing was added to the list of international competitions. The favorite team in the four-man canoe race was the United States team. One member of that team was a young man by the name of Bill Havens.

As the time for the Olympics neared, it became clear that Bill's wife would give birth to her first child at about the same time that Bill would be competing in the Paris Games. In 1924 there were no jet airliners from Paris to the United States, only slow-moving ocean-going ships. And so Bill found himself in a dilemma. Should he go to Paris and risk not being at his wife's side when their first child was born? Or should he withdraw from the team and remain behind. Bill's wife insisted that he go to Paris. After all, he had been working towards this for all these years. It was the culmination of a life-long dream.

The decision was not easy for Bill to make. Finally, after much thought, he decided to withdraw from the competition and remain behind with his wife so that he could be with her when their first child arrived. Bill considered being at her side a higher priority than going to Paris to fulfill a life-long dream.

The Olympics were held and the United States four-man canoe team won the gold medal. Bill's wife was late in giving birth to her first child. So late that Bill could have competed in the event and returned home in time to be with her when she gave birth.

Many people said, "What a shame." But Bill said he had no regrets. After all, his commitment to his wife was more important then, and it still is now.

The story of Bill Havens is a story of how one man paid a high price to fulfill a commitment to someone he loved.

But that is not the end of the story.



The child eventually born to Bill and his wife was a boy, whom they named Frank. Twenty-eight years later, in 1952, Bill received a cablegram from Frank. It was sent from Helsinki, Finland, where the 1952 Olympics were being held. The cablegram read: "Dad, I won. I'm bringing home the gold medal you lost while waiting for me to be born."

Frank Havens had just won the gold medal for the United States in the canoe-racing event, a medal his father had dreamed of winning, but never did.

In Luke 9:23, Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. NIV

Our lives in Christ are lives of sacrifice. Am I willing to give up everything to follow Christ. In the story of the rich young ruler (Luke 18), we find a man who was not willing to give up his material possessions to follow Christ. His belongings were more important than his relationship to Christ. It may not be material possessions, but what is God asking you to give up to follow him?

In our relationship with Jesus Christ, if we are willing to give it all up, Jesus said, "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life," (Matthew 19:29, NIV).

In the same way that Bill Havens received an incredible blessing through a son who won a medal he sacrificed years earlier, God promises us blessing beyond imagine, when we sacrifice for him. When we make those sacrifices, we reap an abundant harvest of joy, peace, eternal life, and that endures forever. Giving up something for God is never a mistake or a loss, the reward is beyond imagination.