



August 28, 2015

### *Grover Travis Newman*

*September 22, 1929 - August 18, 2015*

—*The Very Rev. Dr. Neal Michell*

#### **Introduction – Let us Now Praise Famous Men**

*Let us now praise famous men,*

*and our fathers in their generations.*

<sup>2</sup> *The Lord apportioned to them great glory,  
his majesty from the beginning.*

<sup>3</sup> *There were those who ruled in their kingdoms,  
and were men renowned for their power,  
giving counsel by their understanding,  
and proclaiming prophecies;*

<sup>4</sup> *leaders of the people in their deliberations  
and in understanding of learning for the people,  
wise in their words of instruction; . . .*

<sup>8</sup> *There are some of them who have left a name,  
so that men declare their praise.*

<sup>9</sup> *And there are some who have no memorial,  
who have perished as though they had not lived;  
they have become as though they had not been born,  
and so have their children after them.*

<sup>10</sup> *But these were men of mercy,  
whose righteous deeds have not been forgotten;*

<sup>11</sup> *their prosperity will remain with their  
descendants,  
and their inheritance to their children's children.*

This is a reading from the Apocrypha, from the book of Ecclesiasticus, and it is read on All Saints Day in the church. It is appropriate to read as we celebrate the passing of a great saint in our lives.

I think there are about one-third of the people here today from here in Athens, and about two-thirds of us knew Grover from the Redeemer—Woodland Park-England-community days. For many of you here at St. Matthias, I know that Grover did some teaching. You have enjoyed and appreciated Nancy's musical ministrations. I really hope you appreciate the gift you have in Nancy Newman.

But for those of us from the Redeemer days, we knew Grover as a giant of a man, a man that this reading describes as one "giving counsel by their understanding," "wise in their words of instruction;"

"so that men declare their praise." Numerous lives were changed because of Grover Newman.

#### **What People Have Said About Grover**

Grover had a heart for people. Nancy said she never knew when Grover would be bringing someone home. Steve Peklenk said that Grover was the most important mentor in his life.

Here are a few things that people have said about Grover:

One person said, "I am not sure that I have ever known a more thoroughly Christian man."

Lucy Deliganis said, "He always looked for the gold in people, their destiny in God, and called that forth."

One of the things that Grover did at the Redeemer was to run a single men's household of recovering alcoholics. He was there one night speaking to the men about the authority of the believer. One of the men was drunk. Seriously drunk. Moaning and groaning, asking, "Am I saved?" Over and over, asking if he was saved. Grover got him cleaned up and finally to bed. His response was, "You know, if you've got the Lord's authority, you can pretty much work anything out."

George Mims. "His candor, sense of humor, thoughtfulness, and straight-shooter instinct has endeared him to me and countless others over these years!"

Nan Credle: "Grover changed my life. To me, he was a spiritual mentor and gift from God."

Grover had a quick smile and a keen, even impish sense of humor.

One time when John Farra and his wife were moving to England, they sold their house and donated the profits to build a restroom and showers facility at the Ranch near Giddings, Texas, that Maris Farra owned and was used for retreats for the Redeemer family. Now, understand that John gave me permission to tell this story. He said, Grover and I were up there, and we had showered and shaved and what not. We were both on toilets with this sheet separating us and doing our business when all of a sudden the water line burst where John was and sprayed water all over him. It was a big mess! They got things all cleaned up, and Grover said, "Well, John, that's the first time I ever saw a man attacked by a commode."

Another time at the Redeemer, during the Prayers of the People on a Sunday morning, Grover was up in the balcony and prayed aloud, “Lord, we thank you for our forefathers: Moses, Schiffmayer, Hansen, and Robertson.”

He and Dick Wall owned rental property together in the East End of Houston. One day they were doing some repair work on one of the houses. They had this really tall ladder, and the fellow that worked for them doing repair work was afraid to climb the ladder because the ladder was so tall. He protested, “Oh, Mr. Newman, I can’t climb the ladder. I have a heart condition, and I’m afraid I’d have a heart attack.” Grover replied with a smile on his face, “Well, that’s a risk I’ll just have to take.”

### **Jesus, the Good Shepherd**

The thing that most sticks out to me about Grover is that he was safe. He was gentle, firm, but, really safe. And we all know when people are safe. Babies know when the person holding them is safe, because a crying baby can be soothed by a person the baby perceives as safe. They will not be comforted by a nervous or anxious person.

Life brings its share of pain and heartache, and we each need safe people in our lives. Grover was safe.

That reality is reflected in our Gospel reading today: 14 Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and he lays down his life for his sheep. Jesus said, “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep.” (John 10:14-15) As Christians, we are to reflect the love of Jesus to those around us. Our lives are to point to Him, who is the way, the truth, and the life. Several people said there was nothing Grover wouldn’t do for a friend. Grover *was* a good Shepherd, reflecting the life of *the* Good Shepherd.

What would Grover want you to hear today? this day where we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of Grover? I think he would want you to know who you are in Christ--that at the end of the day, "my hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' Name." If you know who you are in Christ, then you can handle pretty much anything.

The verse that most fully describes Grover to me comes from Micah 2:6-8. He has told you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you

but to do justice, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

### **A Time of Worship**

In Grover’s final days, although he always knew who everyone was, he got to the place where he could not articulate sentences—but he could still sing. Sometimes Nancy would sing to him, and sometimes they would sing together. These songs were the arms of angels that God was using to carry him to the larger life.

I’d like for us to share in that peace that Grover was experiencing in those final days with songs that he cherished. For many of us, these have been balm for our souls as well. I invite us to sing together. If you are not familiar with a song, they’re all simple enough to pick up. Or, feel free just to let it sink deeply into your soul.

Nancy said she wanted this time to be a Grand Celebration. And so it is. We are celebrating the richness of our common life together: the gift of Grover’s life, and the gift of our Lord’s life who is the resurrection and the life, and the gift of our life in Christ—and a richness that binds us together in unity through worship.

Let’s sing together as we bask in love of the Lord for us. As you sing, feel free to close your eyes, raise your hands, or just bask in the love of our Lord.

### **Blessed be the Name**

Blessed be the Name! Blessed be the Name!  
Blessed be the Name of the Lord!  
Blessed be the Name! Blessed be the Name!  
Blessed be the Name of the Lord!

### **Reach out and Touch the Lord**

Reach out and touch the Lord as He goes by.  
You’ll find He’s not too busy to hear your heart’s cry.

He is passing by this moment, your needs He’ll supply,

Reach out and touch the Lord as He goes by.

### **Sweep over My Soul**

Sweep over my soul,  
Sweep over my soul,  
Sweet spirit,  
Sweep over my soul.  
My rest is complete,  
When I sit at his feet,  
Sweet spirit, sweep over my soul.

Good morning, Grover. Well done, thou good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord.