

Letting Your Light Shine for Christ

Those Mississippi delta stinger birds were as black and ominous as the moonless night, and pelting me like rain. The incessant biting and buzzing caused me to swat myself in the head with my own flashlight.

“Dern Skeeters,” Dad said, “Half a can of bug spray ain’t done nothing but get em’ drunk.”

I could tell my little brother Heath was waging a similar battle by the way his flashlight beam stabbed erratically into the thick night. I was seriously second guessing Dad’s plan by the time we slid that Jon boat down the slippery bank into the bayou’s murky water.

“You got your shells boy?” dad asked pushing us off. I nodded and broke the breech on my little .410 shotgun and plugged one in.

“Look-a-there,” he warned, shining his light across the thick swamp ahead. Several sets of eyes reflected back as they slithered across the black water, or hung from the low branches. I gulped. Heath’s face seemed frozen in a state of panic. Then a low belch erupted from down the bank, slowly dissipating behind the unceasing chorus of crickets.

“There’s old Kermit,” dad grinned. “I’ve been after that big boy all year.”

As we skimmed further down the bayou I took aim and blasted a steely eyed water snake swimming near the boat. The spray shot up high into the air and rained on us all. The snake barrel rolled, flopped, and sunk to the muddy bottom.

“Boy, don’t be wasting your shells,” Dad barked. “Save em’ for the ones trying to get in the boat.”

It was at that point I think little Heath may have went into shock.

Dad scanned the bank until he finally came across the big green croaker he was after. He laid his barbed poking pole across his lap and paddled toward it quietly. I expected the big old frog to leap away, but he sat, fascinated by our lights. Then, from out of nowhere, a huge black water moccasin slithered over coiling up right in front of Kermit.

“I can’t get a shot. Turn back,” I whispered, “Dad... turn back...” He just kept paddling.

As we drew closer that fat frog’s muscles tensed. He was about to leap! Dad noticed it and sprung to action. I guess the thought of letting old Kermit get away again was too much for him. In an instant he had leaned out over that hissing snake and thrust his spear into his fat little buddy with amazing precision.

The snake immediately retaliated, lashing out with those long sharp fangs. Digging in, that old serpent spun wildly injecting his full load of venom. I screamed. Oh the horror of it all!!!

“Hush boy,” Dad yelled. The snake had only latched on to his gigging stick. Dad shook him off, whacked him with the paddle, and slapped his prize frog Popsicle in poor little Heath’s quivering lap.

But anyway- I reckon this old world can seem about as dark and violent as that old bayou many times. It almost makes you want to run and hide under a pew somewhere. Of course, as Christians we can’t. God cares too deeply about those froggy souls out there in the muck and mire that need hauling into the boat. Somebody has to take His light out into the darkness so that He can pluck them out. (*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people; that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light; 1 Peter 2:9 KJV*)

Sometimes the mere contemplation of meandering outside my comfort zone for the cause of Christ triggers the enemy to pelt my mind with such a barrage of tormenting thoughts concerning my own inadequacies that I inevitably want to whack myself in the head with a flashlight, and that nasty serpent just seems to be daring me to try. Well let him hiss. He's just a liar. Besides, we don't come in our own strength? God has given us the tools and the armor we need to work way beyond his reach. God will help us shake off that old serpent, whack him in the head, and leave out of there with the prize.

It's time we Christians began to think outside the boat! God may not need us all to walk on water, but He does need a Church at least willing to lean out every now and then. It always helps me to remember how Jesus sent people back into the darkness to rescue me. I say let's stop second guessing Dad's plan.

-Guy Sheffield 4-24-06