

WHO'S GONNA FILL THEIR PEWS?

Max Barnes and Troy Seals wrote a country song called, "Who's Gonna Fill their Shoes?" These are some of their lyrics: "You know this old world is full of singers, but just a few are chosen. They tear your heart out when they sing, imagine life without them. All your radio heroes like the outlaw that walks through Jesse's dreams. No, there will



never be another red-headed stranger; the Okie from Muskogee, or hello darling. Lord, I wonder who's gonna fill their shoes? Who's gonna play the Opry and the Wabash cannonball? Who's gonna give their heart and soul to get to me and you? Lord, I wonder who's gonna fill their shoes? God bless the boys from Memphis, blue suede shoes and Elvis. Much too soon he left the world in tears. They tore up the 505, old Jerry Lee and Charlie, and 'go eat go' still echoes through the years. You know the heart of county music still beats in Luke the drifter; you can tell it when he sang, I saw the light. Old Marty, Hank, and Lefty, why I can feel them right here with me, on this silver Eagle rolling through the night...".

From the lyrics, "who's gonna fill their shoes," I decided to write a story called, "Who's Gonna Fill Their Pews?" Larry Linville wrote the poem, "Old Church Pews." These are his words: "For many years they filled a church on a long winding country road, where people sat every Sunday as God's special word was bestowed. They were crudely built with lumber members sawed at the local mill. They had no cushions to sit on, but they were made with special skill. Even though uncomfortable, old men could still go to sleep; while the preacher preached his sermon, and sometimes the women would weep. They held many grieving people while obituaries were read; to people seeking God's comfort, as together their tears were shed. Flowers and candles were fastened with white ribbons at each row's end, when young couples were married in the presence of every friend. Beneath each pew was dried up gum, especially where young folks sat, in a couple of rows in the back, and laughed at a woman's hat. Now they stand proudly year after year, with dust where you can write your name. They miss those who once worshiped there, knowing they have no need of shame. They did their task so well and complaining is not their style. They treasure all those memories and if you look you'll see them smile."

Christ has given me the grace upon grace, and the inspiration to write my stories. Others can say it best, when my words are not enough. Michael P. Johnson wrote the poem, "Take a Pew." These are his words: "There's no one called to fill a pew, but some yet sit with nought to do. When work's at hand, they shrink and swerve, when Jesus came on earth to serve. The lost outside die everywhere, unknown eternal life's to share. Although we're called their souls to win, yet still they perish steeped in sin. The Lord said, 'Wash each other's feet, then see the chaff fall from the wheat.' The proud may say, 'of what you ask, for me is not this menial task.' But what is great and what is not? What's an "i" without a dot? What is in the church that is valued most? The pulpit, pew, or Holy Ghost? Some think God's children can't understand, lest they come diploma in hand. Could this be where failure lies? For won't the least confront the wise? Like Matthew, Mark, Peter and John, on such God has relied upon. Not one possessed papers from school, yet each

God called to be His tool. No other place had Christ to search, through unschooled men he built His church. God's word was kept in every way, what more can schools do now today? Yet all are called to do their bit, much more than in a pew to sit. Best think if when Christ speaks to you, there's many called, God chooses few.”

It was a chilly day in April, when I opened the side door to the church. I turned on the church lights, and unlocked the main church door. I pulled a chair by the main glass door. One might say that I fill the role of door keeper, church greeter, and usher, all in one. The people are glad to see me back, after being gone for six weeks. Anne Wilson, Benjamin Glover, and Jeff Sonjka wrote the song, “Sunday Sermons.” These are just a few of their lyrics: “Seven years old, third row pew, John 3:16, something changed in me. Red letters coming off the page, flooding my heart with amazing grace. I knew then I believed and those roots run deep. Oh, I've been through some faith shaking hard times, yeah! But nothing's gonna make me forget, everyone of those Sunday Sermons. Every time that choir would sing, I could hear my Savior calling, telling me how much He loves me. No matter what the world throws at me, I know His word is true. It all started with hearts stirring, spirit moving Sunday Sermons...”.

My life almost came to an unexpected end, back in March. Few people could have survived what had happened to me. Modern medicine and a team of skilled physicians pulled this “Wounded Warrior” back from going over the cliff to eternity. Thanks to Christ's grace and inspiration, I'm back, typing away on the laptop, and writing stories again. Yes, I was blessed, and I am thankful for God's will and plan for me. So, I continue to write and share my stories with family and friends. J. Randal Matheny wrote a short poem called, “The Empty Pew.” These are his words: “Your normal place at church last Sunday was bare, your smile cheered no one in the needed throng; your voice said no amen at the end of prayer, and none were edified by your lifting song. Our souls are poorer since you were not there. A sad reminder is this empty pew; your brethren and God is missing you.”

Sadly, many pews are empty in churches all across this nation today. It's a trend that shows a decline in the importance of Christ in the lives of both young and older adults. I feel that a lot of loneliness, sadness, and unhappiness comes into play when Christ is not a part of their lives. Faith and hope, are two powerful ingredients necessary to make a meaningful life. With so much dust accumulating, it makes me wonder, who's gonna fill their pews?

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*Read other stories by John F. Hall and others at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>