

Pastor's Corner – 10-19-2019 – Winterbeard® and Manly Men

Well, we've had the first snowfall here in North Dakota and that means it's time for Winterbeard (patent pending). Winterbeard is that magical time from the first snowfall to the last where real men stop trimming down their beards. That's right, I said real men grow their beards in the winter. I once had a friend remind me that there's really only two types of people in the world: men who grow beards, and women. So yeah, manly men do Winterbeard™.

Ok, so maybe beard vs. bald-face isn't what qualifies a man as being manly. So, if not beards, what then?

We could go with the old-timey gender expectations and say that manly men are stoic creatures of granite who leave home at the early light of dawn to spend the day rustlin' cattle, fixin' fences, plowin' dirt, callin' people "pilgrim", and chasin' off ner-do-well's (I'm basically just summarizing what I remember from old John Wayne movies). These manly men only come back home when the steel triangle rings signaling that the Missus has finished cookin' up the vittles (threw a bit of Jed Clampet in there for good measure). Cooking, cleaning, child rearin' (I don't know why I've stopped using the letter "g" at the end of my words), well, that's women's work. Right?

Oof, if that's what it takes to be a manly-man, I'm in trouble. I do almost all the cooking in our family. I also do almost all the laundry and all the cleaning. The one year we homeschooled our daughter, yep, that was me too. This is out of necessity. My wife never really learned to cook, so either I cook or we starve (or order Domino's for every meal). My wife also has a higher tolerance for clutter than I do, so if I want a tidier home it's up to me. And finally, my wife would rather buy new clothes than wash old ones, so to stay out of the poor house, I wash the clothes. My point is that I do quite a lot of "non-manly" things that John Wayne would have avoided. But that's ok because... well, because I have a beard!

While I don't necessarily subscribe to all the old-fashioned gender expectations (i.e. men have to be the bread winners and women have to be the bread bakers) I do think there are certain things that separate men from women and men from boys. If a spider needs dispatched – I'm the one who gets tasked with that responsibility (it's not that my wife can't do it, she just prefers not to). If the gutters need cleaned out – I'm the one up on the ladder (again, Amy would be perfectly capable but – eww, it's gross). If something needs to be retrieved from the top shelf – I'm the one called into action (we have step stools but I'm just so much taller). Oh, and when it snows 16 inches I'm the one pushing the shovel.

I don't want to try and define manliness for everyone but I do think there are certain qualities that men should have. Men should be willing to sacrifice personal interests for their family, friends, and church. We should be the ones to step up to challenges, to do the difficult things, and to protect our loved ones. When a 99 year-old matriarch of the church needs a piano moved out of her basement, the manly men show up and get the job done (I'm speaking of you Dan, David, and Jim).

I don't think that manly men are arrogant or "macho." There's no need for aggression or posturing. But we should be sturdy and dependable. Manly men are problem solvers, peace makers, and defenders of those who can't defend themselves. If there's something that needs fixed, manly men step up to fix it. They should also know their way around a roll of duct tape, as Red Green says, "if the women can't find ya handsome, they should at least find ya handy."

I'm not saying that women can't do these things or that they shouldn't have these qualities. In fact, the Biblical picture is that man and woman should stand side-by-side, complementing each other as equals. Manly men can fill in the gaps and provide the things for the family that their wives can't. And likewise, womanly women can make up for the deficiencies in their husbands. That's what the whole "two become one" thing is all about.

A week ago I had the opportunity to witness some manly men in action. We had canceled church because of the snow and on Sunday morning I was planning to go down to clear the sidewalks. It

was about 9am and I looked out my kitchen window over the church parking lot and saw one of our members, Willie Kostenko, get out of his car and head to the maintenance room. I quickly threw on my coat and went down to help him. After I walked down to the church we exchanged a bare handful of words ('cause manly men are about action not chitter-chatter) then got to work, each of us on our own snowblower.

At one point I was clearing snow up towards one of the back doors of the church. The blower wasn't able to get it all so I told myself I'd come back later with the shovel. By the time I made it back that snow had already been cleared. It hadn't been Willie who had done it because he ran to get more gas for the blowers. I didn't know who had cleared it until Ruben Dockter came around the corner. "What are you doing here pastor?" he asked. "This is supposed to be the deacon's job!"

That right there is an example of manly men. To my knowledge, nobody asked them to come out, they just new there was a job that needed to be done and they showed up to do it. Oh, and did I mention that one of them is in his 80's and the other is over 90? Age is just a number, right?

So, here's to the manly men. May your tribe increase. And a special thank-you to Willie and Ruben for coming out to clear snow last Sunday. It is much appreciated.

I also want to give a message to the rest of the men of our church reading this Pastor's Corner: If you are able bodied, under 90 years old, and have not yet signed up to be on the snow removal crew – please do so. Alternatively, you can turn in your man card at the end of the service today. If for some reason we do have to revoke your man card don't worry, you can earn it back by growing a 2019-2020 Winterbeard (all rights reserved).

Happy Sabbath
Pastor Tyler