

Divine Appointments Illustration

Story

The headline in the Chattanooga Times didn't tell the whole story, it simply said that a man by the name of Rolley Arseno was the fifth escape prisoner from the Fort Pillows State Penitentiary and had been arrested after breaking into the home of a couple in Mason Tennessee. Nell Mahoney a colonist for the Chattanooga Times decided that she would do some investigating and find out, the rest of the story, as Paul Harvey would say.

It turned out that at about 8:30 that morning this elderly couple Nathan and Louise De Grathenread were at home. They had just finished breakfast. Nathan was letting the cats out while Louise chatted on the phone with a neighbor. Looking out the window, she saw a man approach Nathan with a shotgun. He held the gun to Nathan's head. "Be quiet", the man said. "Don't make a move or I will blow your head off." Louise urged her neighbor to call the police quickly; one of the convicts had escaped before hanging up the phone.

Moments later the door bust open and the convict put them both against the wall. "Don't make me shot you", he growled. Seventy-three year old Louise spoke up. "First thing young man, put down that gun. This is a Christian home and I don't allow violence around here. Now put it down." Very obediently the convict put the gun down on the sofa and said, "Ma'am, I haven't eaten in three days".

"I'm going to feed you", she replied. "But first, Nathan – go get this man some dry socks." She proceeded to spread out a full southern style breakfast. Used her best china and best linen and sat him down. "Now young man, in this home, before we eat, first we thank God for the food He has given us." And with that she reached out and took his hand. She said it was shaking the whole time. So she thanked God for the meal He had provided, and she thanked God for protecting this young man and for bringing him to their home safely.

While they were eating, she gave him a Bible study. A very short one – that Christ had come to seek and to save that which was lost. Although he had escaped from prison, he needed to go back and finish up his sentence. He needed to pay his debt to society, but that he was already forgiven in God's sight.

Just a few minutes later, they heard the sound of police sirens. I don't know why the police always have to announce they are coming. But the young man jumped up and said, "They will kill me. They have been hunting me for three days and I know they are going to kill me." She said, "You stay here, I will take care of the police." And this lady, 73 years old, went out on the front porch, the police cars had all pulled up, door were open and police officers were behind the doors with guns pointed at the front of the house and she said, "First of all put down those guns, this is a Christian home and we don't allow any violence." And obediently the men put down the guns. And she said this young man is inside, he is unarmed and I will bring him out to you. But I will have not shooting on this property.

She went back in and together, she and her husband escorted the prisoner out to the police car, where he was hand cuffed and taken back again to the prison.

The colonist of the Chattanooga Times asked her, if at any point she was afraid. She said, “No – for I believe that God brought him to our home for a special reason. And I felt, while I was praying that a change was beginning to happen in this young man’s life. We are going to go to the prison and visit him every week. We are going to bring him a Bible and we are going to have Bible studies with him, because God brought that young man to us.”

Divine Appointment Commentary

I think that this is what Christ was referring to in Mathew 25, when he said, “Then I, the king said, come – blessed of my Father into the kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world. For I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me water, I was a stranger and you took me into your home. Naked and you clothed me, sick and in prison and you visited me. [And I believe, that if he had met Louise De Gathenread, He would have said, “I had escaped from prison and you showed me mercy.]

And then these righteous ones will reply, “Sir, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give a drink, or a stranger and help you, or naked and clothed you. When did we ever see you sick and in prison and visit you.” And then the King will tell you, “When you were doing it to the least of these my children, you were doing it to Me.”

Paul, who experienced much persecution and hardship in his life, had slept in many prison cells, was beaten, flogged, shipwrecked. Always in danger, sometimes from enemies and sometime from his own country men, said, in Timothy ch4 vs 6:

“For I am ready to be offered and my time is at hand. For I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness that the Lord of righteousness will give me on that day, and not to me only, but to all those who love His appearing.”

For Paul, it wasn’t wearing a gold crown that made him sacrifice so much in life. Nor was it the idea of walking on streets of gold or walking through gates made of pearls, or looking at a sea that looked like crystal. Nor was it the eternal retirement plan that we so often think of when we think of heaven.

It was simply the continuing of a relationship that he had enjoyed with the Lord, here on earth. That would be his glory in heaven.

It’s like the words of the old hymn that says,

When all my labors and trials are ore,
And I am safe on that beautiful shore,
Just to be near the dear Lord, I adore,
Will through the ages, be glory for me.

Friends will be there I have loved long ago,
Joy, like a river, around me will flow,
Yet, just a smile from my Savior, I know,
Will through the ages, be glory for me.