

“CLASSIC TV AND FAITH:  
V - M\*A\*S\*H\*  
‘WHAT HE DID FOR LOVE’”  
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Elkton United Methodist Church  
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I John 4:7-12

John 3:11-21

If you’ve been here for any or all of the last four weeks, you know that the sermon has included a clip from a classic television show. What I’ve tried to do is use these clips to help us see issues of faith with which we still wrestle today. We’ve seen jealousy and competition through “I Love Lucy,” different views of family through “The Mary Tyler Moore Show,” gossip by way of an episode of “The Dick Van Dyke Show” and pride via Sheriff Taylor on “The Andy Griffith Show.”

Today, however, will be a little different. As you might expect, trying to fit a film clip into an already short sermon (due to communion) seemed like quite a challenge for me. But turns out, it wasn’t. I think I’ve found a television clip that portrays very well the whole picture of communion - or more specifically, what Christ did and does for us.

The television clip comes from the classic show - M\*A\*S\*H\*. MASH was a show that ran in the 1970's about a MASH unit - a mobile army surgical hospital - unit in the Korean War. It featured a wonderful cast portraying memorable characters - like doctors Hawkeye Pierce, Trapper John McIntyre, Henry Blake, and others, and nurses like “Hot Lips” Houlihan, company clerks Radar O’Reilly and Max Klinger, and a dear sweet chaplain named Father Mulcahy. While it was a serious show about serious issues of life, death and the inhumanity of war, it also was filled with lots of laughter and warmth.

The episode we’re going to look at for a few moments today is called “Kim.” Kim is a little Korean boy, and as the episode begins, he is being treated in the MASH hospital for injuries suffered when his village was attacked. He is a precious little boy, and all of a sudden, he’s all alone in the world - his family gone in the attack.

Well, little Kim melts the hearts of everyone he meets. No one wants him to have to go back to the terrible life of his war-torn country. And no one wants him to have to join so many other kids at the local orphanage.

Trapper John, one of the doctors, played by Wayne Rogers, decides that he and his family in America will adopt him. So he writes a letter to his wife asking

her about it, and he gets a letter back saying that she and their daughters are delighted about the prospect of having that little boy in their family. So all's right with the world - as soon as arrangements can be made, Kim will go off to America to leave with the McIntyres.

In the meantime, everyone in the camp is helping to watch over him. Which brings us to the scene we're about to see. Nurse Houlihan and Dr. Frank Burns are supposed to be watching Kim, but get distracted, and all of a sudden, his life is in mortal danger.

Now, before we see what happens, I want to invite you to think about something. While you're watching, put yourself in the place of little Kim, and think of Trapper John as the Lord.

Now, take a look at the screen.

How many times do you and I wind up in the minefield, either because of our own doing, or through no fault of our own? Life happens, stuff happens, sometimes bad stuff happens, and we find ourselves in trouble, sitting on minefields, seemingly ready to explode.

Sometimes we're there because of our own sins and shortcomings. We know we're doing wrong, we know we're not living as Christ calls us to live, and suddenly we're in danger, and need help.

And sometimes we're in the midst of a minefield because, well, life is just that way. Sickness comes out of nowhere, or our jobs are yanked out from under us, or suddenly we're sinking under a pile of bills that have no way of being paid. Sometimes we're in the midst of a minefield through no fault of our own, yet there nonetheless, in need of rescue.

And every time, friends, every time, there is One who comes to rescue us, to save us, to take us home - and His name is Jesus. He loves us so much that He comes to us in the midst of our trouble, risking His own life, to save ours.

Indeed, not only risking His life, but sacrificing it, that we might live. That's what we remember today, as we come to this communion table. That God loved us, and loves us so much, that He sent His only begotten Son to save us. He sent His only Son to rescue us from trouble and from ourselves.

He showed us what real, true love looks like. It's a love that will go to the ends of the earth for us. It's a love that will take the worst for us, that we might live. It's a love that bears all things, endures all things - for us.

And it is a love that is always, always there. You know, I couldn't help but think about that at the end of that clip, where Trapper John is standing there looking at the truck carrying little Kim and his mother driving away. While the fact that Kim was reunited with his mother was good, it was still touching and poignant because Trapper John's heart was hurting. Suddenly he was alone.

The more times I watched that clip, the more I pictured Jesus standing there when we walk away from him. He rescues us again and again, and yet, since time began, we humans still walk away, and I know His heart hurts when we do. We walk away from His boundless, sacrificial love - that is, until the next time we need Him again, and we cry out for Him - and amazingly, He is there.

Today, when you come for communion, when you taste the bread and juice, and kneel in prayer, remember the times you have been caught in the minefields of life, and He was there for you, bringing you out to safety, and new life. Give thanks for His endless love, and pray that you and I never turn away again from His love that never, ever lets us go. May it be so.

Amen.