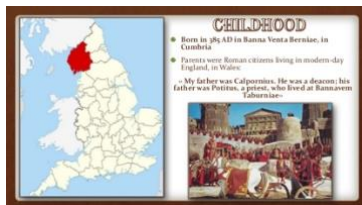


Tomorrow will be St Patrick's Day. Most people know it as a day when we wear green to keep from getting pinched or the day when everyone drinks beer that has been dyed green. But I want to talk about part of the story regarding this man who we still talk about today. The big idea we're after is that the Bible tells us to learn from others who are faithful in their walk with Christ. Paul encouraged young believers again and again to be imitators of him in his walk with the Lord. We can learn much from the life of Patrick concerning humility, repentance, belief, salvation, and dedication. Near the end of the apostle Paul's life, he tells us to be imitators of God. *5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; <sup>2</sup> and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. (Ephesians 5:1-2, NASB).* Patrick lived his life as an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma. That is why we are still talking about him tonight.



Maewyn Succat (later known as "Patrick") was born 338 years after Jesus' death. He wasn't from Ireland at all. He was actually from the land in the west of Britain that we now call Wales. This was when the last vestiges of the Roman Empire were still present in Britain. He was raised in a Christian home. His grandfather, Potitus, was a pastor, and his father, Colpornius, was a deacon.

Don't think of them as Roman Catholics because they were not. They were a Christian family that spoke their own Celtic language (like Welsh or Gaelic today), but they used Latin because the Bible had recently been translated into Latin and was used in church services.

Rome was falling apart and the people in the little village were no longer being protected by the Romans. Scholars differ in their opinions, but many Irish historians believe Patrick was taken to a king in County Antrim (the far north of Ireland). It was there that he lived out six years as a slave. He arrived at the age of 16 and he would end up escaping Ireland when he was 22 years old.

It was in this time of distress that Patrick put his faith and trust in the Jesus of the Bible. I quote pieces of his confession verbatim, and the foot noted scriptures are the actual footnoted scriptures that Patrick inserted. I am amazed by the amount of scripture in his letter. Several quotes are made from Jewish scripture (like the book of Tobit) that weren't included later in the canonization of scripture. Listen as Patrick speaks to us through the centuries.

*I was taken prisoner. I was about sixteen at the time. At that time, I did not know the true God. I was taken into captivity in Ireland, along with thousands of others. We deserved this, because we had gone away from God, and did not keep his commandments.<sup>1</sup> We would not listen to our priests, who advised us about how we could be saved. [He annotated his confession with much scripture]*

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel 9:5-6 we have not listened to your servants the prophets.

Patrick relates that it was out on the hillsides, in the snow, on the sides of mountains that he pursued God with all of his heart. He saw his own pride and he saw just how little he was in reality. He repented and was saved.

*It was there that the Lord opened up my awareness of my lack of faith. Even though it came about late, I recognized my failings. So, I turned with all my heart to the Lord my God<sup>2</sup> and he looked down on my lowliness<sup>3</sup>, and had mercy on my youthful ignorance. He guarded me before I knew him, and before I came to wisdom and could distinguish between good and evil. He protected me and consoled me as a father does for his son.*

*That is why I cannot be silent – nor would it be good to do so – about such great blessings and such a gift that the Lord so kindly bestowed in the land of my captivity. **This is how we can repay such blessings, when our lives change and we come to know God, to praise and bear witness to his great wonders before every nation under heaven.***

*This is because there is no other God, nor will there ever be, nor was there ever, except God the Father. He is the one who was not begotten, the one without a beginning, the one from whom all beginnings come, the one who holds all things in being – this is our teaching. And his son, Jesus Christ, whom we testify has always been, since before the beginning of this age, with the father in a spiritual way. He was begotten in an indescribable way before every beginning. Everything we can see, and everything beyond our sight, was made through him. He became a human being; and, having overcome death, was welcomed to the heavens to the Father. The Father gave him all power over every being, both heavenly and earthly and beneath the earth. Let every tongue confess that Jesus Christ, in whom we believe and whom we await to come back to us in the near future, is Lord and God<sup>4</sup>. He is judge of the living and of the dead<sup>5</sup>; he rewards every person according to their deeds.<sup>6</sup> He has generously poured on us the Holy Spirit<sup>7</sup>, the gift and promise of immortality, who makes believers and those who listen to be children of God and co-heirs with Christ.<sup>8</sup> This is the one we acknowledge and adore – one God in a trinity of the sacred name. He said through the prophet: **‘Call on me in the day of your***

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<sup>2</sup> Joel 2:11 “I will turn back with all of my heart to the Lord.”

<sup>3</sup> Luke 1:48 He looked on the lowliness of his servant.

<sup>4</sup> Phillipians 2:9-11 Every knee should bow at the name of Jesus, in heaven, on earth, and under the earth. Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 10:42 God appointed him judge of the living and of the dead.

<sup>6</sup> Romans 2:6 He will reward each one according to his works.

<sup>7</sup> Titus 3:5-6 The Holy Spirit, whom he abundantly poured upon us.

<sup>8</sup> Romans 8:16-17 We are children of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

***distress, and I will set you free, and you will glorify me.***<sup>9</sup> Again he said: 'It is a matter of honor to reveal and tell forth the works of God.'<sup>10</sup>

*Although I am imperfect in many ways, I want my brothers and relations to know what I'm really like, so that they can see what it is that inspires my life.*

After Patrick came to Christ, he had a vision or a dream in which God directed him out of captivity. He caught a ship far from the north of Ireland, and he made his way to Gaul (modern day France). Scholars believe that he lived there for probably 15 years in a monastic community, and after being confirmed and ordained, he went home to Britain. While back at home he had a dream of a man calling him back to Ireland. He ended up going back and went back to the home of the king he had served. The island was filled with conversation about this powerful man of God who was coming who had power that even baffled the Druids. When he got to the king's house, the king locked himself inside of his home with all of his household and he set the house on fire killing everyone.

Patrick went straight to the heart of pagan Ireland, the Hill of Tara, where he did spiritual battle with the evil realm. Not far from Tara is a hill called Cnoc an Slane. It was the custom of the Druids to light the first fire after winter around April 1. The bonfire started in Tara, and as other Druids saw the fire they lit it on other hill tops. The penalty for lighting a fire before the Druids lit their fire, was death.



Legend tells us that the night before the Druids were to light the fire, Patrick lit a bonfire on the neighboring Hill of Slane and the Druids sent emissaries to kill the person who had done such an affront to their old customs and religion. We don't know how much is legend and how much is real because God is able to do what He wants to do, but legend and myth give instances where Patrick, through the power of the Holy Spirit, outdid the power of the Druids. **The bottom line is that he conquered them instead of the other way around, and many of the delegation gave their hearts to Christ upon meeting Patrick. It was the fire of the passion of the Holy Spirit which brought them to their knees.**

As we finish up tonight, I want to ask you what inspires YOUR life? What are you REALLY like? Have you come to the end of yourself? Have you realized you're a speck of dust in the panorama of history? Realizing this by no means signifies that you are insignificant. To the contrary, God has a purpose, a place, and a plan for you.

One thing that we can learn from Patrick this week, is that if your purpose is clear, solid, and righteous, as in the case of St. Patrick, there is nothing that can stop you. Additionally, Patrick made decision after decision quietly within himself to follow Jesus and to do the right thing. In

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<sup>9</sup> Psalm 49(50):15 Call on me in the day of trouble. I will deliver you and you will glorify me.

<sup>10</sup> Tobit 12:7 It is honourable to reveal and confess the works of God.

his confession he refers to the fact that this can bring ridicule by others. He quietly chose to not be moved by the opinion of others.

This week, examine your life. Are you passionate about anything? More importantly, are you passionate about your relationship with God. Jesus said, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”* (Matthew 5:16, KJV). Patrick did this in a real and tangible way.

The lessons we learn from Patrick are way more important than green hats and green beer. The lessons include: (1) finding forgiveness from the God Who made you and Who loves you, (2) finding your purpose for being here on this earth, (3) discovering the absolute joy of living life passionately in pursuit of that purpose, and (4) experiencing the absolute peace in following Jesus as Messiah and Lord.

Really the goal should never be to be like Patrick, rather it should be to be like the Savior that Patrick came to know and love. Maybe knowing about Patrick helps us to realize a little better how God can take ordinary people like us (and Patrick) and use us for extraordinary purposes.

Lá Fhéile Pádraig Sona Duit!

Happy Saint Patrick’s Day to you!

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at [uniongrove362@gmail.com](mailto:uniongrove362@gmail.com) or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.