

2nd Opinion: The best day of your entire life

May 1, 2009

Joseph Reddeford Walker was a great trailblazing mountain man of the American frontier. His career began in 1832 with an invitation to join a trapping and trading expedition into the unexplored West.

The next year, he embarked on a journey from St. Louis to the Mexican province of Alta California, a feat previously accomplished only twice. Ignoring his predecessors' trails, Walker led a small group on a new route through the Sierra Nevada that proved far more challenging than expected. Several times during the journey, they were forced to eat their horses simply to stay alive. But after crossing the Continental Divide, Walker and his companions were rewarded with an amazing sight that no Anglo-American had ever seen before—the towering redwoods and majestic waterfalls of the Yosemite Valley. Years later, each member of that expedition recalled this event as being among the greatest experiences of his life.

Just before Walker died in 1867, nearly blind and approaching 70 years old, the intrepid mountain man remembered a single day as the best day of his life. He requested that a remembrance of it be carved on his tombstone. This is how the inscription reads: “Joseph Reddeford Walker: Camped at Yosemite, November 13, 1833.”

If you had to reduce the recollection of your life to just one day, which day would it be? Is there one day that stands out above the rest?

How about the day you were born? As important as that day is for you personally, you probably wouldn't consider it the best day of your life. How about your wedding day, or the day you were baptized? The amazing thing

is that the best day of your life probably doesn't have any ritual significance to you. It was probably just one day among many, but a day when something really special happened.

Every day has the potential to be the best day of our lives. It all comes down to how we use the days of our lives. Chilo, one of the seven sages of ancient Greece, was once asked what is the hardest thing to do. He replied: "To use and employ a man's time well."

We would do well to heed this advice, but also remember time does not belong to us; it belongs to God. When we make him and not our own desires the object of our passion, he will enable us to use our time for blessing—of others and ourselves.

In the fourth chapter of James, this truth is described: "Come now, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a town and spend a year there, doing business and making money.' Yet you do not even know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, 'If the Lord wishes, we will live and do this or that' ... Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you" (James 4:13-15, 10).

If we will turn our hearts toward God in that way, then each and every day that we live can become the best day of our lives.

Bruce Lampert is director of pastoral care at Hendrick Memorial Medical Center in Abilene.