

MARK'S REMARKS

She is inspiring and picturesque. A blend of simplicity, elegance, and mystery, one is charmed by the way she is fashioned. Strikingly attractive, she is one-of-a-kind. Bono, lead singer for U2, might describe her as an “*Original of the Species.*” Once you meet her, you can forget about ever forgetting her.

This beauty is a Nine Hole Par 3 golf course located in the pines of Northern Minnesota (sorry bachelors). Pine trees reaching straight up to the sky and divinely placed White Birch provide the backdrop for thickly carpeted greens and play the part of spectator as they narrowly hem in patchy fairways. If you golf with an early morning sun or an evening sunset, a deer and her fawn might furnish you with a glance indicating they would like to play through.

To reach the cup on Hole 5, a golfer needs to strike the ball 145 yards up a gentle slope avoiding a towering tree on the left side of the fairway. My dad, who walks the fairways only once a year, decided a five-wood was the club of choice. After a swing that bore evidence to an aging body and an aching lower back, I commented, “Nice shot!” With a defined arc and a radar-locked look, the ball’s flight pattern had a look of perfection. Landing just short of the green, the ball rolled up and seemed to settle. After a brief moment, the white speck in the distance was gone. My nephew exclaimed, “That ball went in Grandpa!”

After walking the 145 yards, it was confirmed. Dad had hit a hole-in-one. Shocked and amazed we laughed. Grandson slapped grandpa’s back and shook his hand. Son hugged father. The light drizzle, the subsequent double and triple bogeys could not dampen the day. Two people witnessed a hole-in-one made by the unlikeliest of people.

We could travel in several directions at this point. The joy and happiness grandson and son felt for grandpa and dad as we shared in the excitement. “*Rejoice with those who rejoice*” (Rom 12:15a). The reality that for a moment but a moment still, we found ourselves living in the words “*...when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears*” (I Cor 13:10b). What several books already have aimed to do, we could write about walking the fairways of life, the motivation toward perfection (Christ-likeness), the importance of breaking down the essentials of the game (Discipleship), the undeserved gift of a hole-in-one (Grace), giving thanks for the surprises in life, and even about priorities in life as one author indicates when he mentions golf stands for **Game Of Life First**.

Yet for today, I am reminded my relationship with dad has known joy and pain, satisfaction and disappointment, comfort and hurt. Each of us has played a role in providing enriched closeness or strained distance. There have been seasons where we believed we could conquer the world as our hearts overflowed with confident joyous love. Others seasons we have inflicted deep wounds that left deep scars. However in the midst of a small celebration taking place just off the green on Hole 5 I knew threaded deeply and purposefully in the complexities of our father/son relationship, love still reigned. Protecting love. Trusting love. Hoping love. Persevering love. Never failing love.

“*...these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*” I Cor 13:13

Loved and loving,

Pastor Mark