

“Sump’n!”

There was an old gospel song from years ago with the first line going something like, “Signs of the times are everywhere, sump’n sump’n sump’n.” Yeah, that’s what you say, “sump’n sump’n sump’n,” when you can’t remember the actual words of a song...which for me is most of the words to most songs I try to sing. Yep, I have a hard time remembering words to songs...well, actually, I have a hard time remembering anything anymore. I can’t remember where I left my glasses when they are on top of my head, or where I left my keys when they are swinging from my belt...yeah, you know what I’m talk’n about. You do it too! It is so aggravating...it actually kinda gets me ticked off at myself. And I think, “Man, sump’n’s going on cause I can’t remember hardly anything anymore...senility, dementia, Alzheimer’s or simply old-timers. I don’t know, but sump’n’s going on.”

Speaking of that word “sump’n”, a good ole boy taught me years ago that sometimes you gots to pencil in some time for yourself, especially if you are a “yes” person like me who wants to help everybody and every church when called upon. So he tells me, just go through your calendar and every now and again, on a day when you don’t have nothing to do, write the word “sump’n” down. That way when somebody calls with a non-emergency something or other and wants to tie up your day with who knows what, just say, “I’m sorry, but I have sump’n already scheduled on my calendar that day.” And then use the day wisely to catch up on overdue stuff or to get ahead or to simply relax a bit and catch your breath. That little trick has saved my sanity more than once over the course of a lifetime of ministry.

And then sometimes we use that word “sump’n” when we don’t know what we are talking about. Like, “You know, it has sump’n to do with that gadget thing that makes sump’n happen when the motor is running.” Or, “There’s sump’n up with all that, but I can’t seem to put my finger on exactly what it is.” Yep, we use that word constantly when we can’t think of a better word to use.

And then sometimes we use the word “sump’n” when we get all excited ‘bout something and nothing seems to come out except a word like “sump’n.” Here’s an example from just this week. And this is true ya’ll...honest! Sump’n happened two days ago that left me shak’n in my boots and screaming like a...well let’s just say like a man who had a reason to scream like a girl, but his manhood wouldn’t quite let him get there.

Preston Sprouse wanted to get rid of an old stainless steel cooker that came out of his BBQ restaurant years ago. So I went over there to pick it up. It’s big and heavy and as he got

down off his tractor to help get it in his front end loader, sump’n squirted past his foot and crawled up under the cooker. Preston said, “Oh man, there went sump’n past my foot...I think it was a copperhead.” Sho’nuff it was, and after standing on the concrete slab inside his barn and killing that thang with a hoe when he raised the cooker up, I held it up all proud and threw it in the front-end loader bucket. I then went under the railing to the outside and went to hold the cooker while he used the tractor to pick it up...and that’s when it happened. Sump’n caught my eye, and I mean right where I had been standing less than thirty seconds before, it made me do a double take. I dropped that cooker and screamed like a...a...a...a man who just saw a four foot copperhead slithering right where he had just stood moments before. I hollered at Preston, “Get off that tractor son...you ain’t gonna believe this.”

I mean, if it was a Jerry Clower story, he’d be slobbering and say’n, “Awwh...awwhh...Marcel go get Uncle Ledbetter...awh, awhh...come quick...you ain’t gonna believe this!” And there it was, a fire breathing slithering four foot serpent...biggest copperhead me and Preston dun ever seen...and we kill’d that thang. Two copperheads right there where we were working. My heart was a’pounding, I mean we were lucky to be alive. And then the worst part of it all, Barbara, Preston’s wife, comes down and says, “What’s all the holler’n about?” with a smile on her face?” And about that time, I’m holding up one end of the cooker and the other end is in the tractor bucket and Barbara sees that first snake I threw in the bucket of the tractor. Well, the movement of the tractor made that dead snake look like them dry bones in Ezekiel coming to life. Literally, she thought that dead snake was alive and she went to screaming like a girl, which she’s qualified to do cause she is one. But, here I am, up in my truck with my hand under the cooker just a few feet from the dead snake in the bucket, which I’d done forgot about, and Barbara’s screaming “Snake, snake!” looking right at where my hands were! Lord have mercy! I freaked out cause I done had two close encounters with them slithering serpents and I dropped my end of the cooker and liked to have died right there of sho’nuf heart failure.

Now I’m gonna tell you, that was sump’n, and I mean sump’n else. I couldn’t take it anymore and pronounced Preston’s place possessed by the devil himself, declared Anathema over his barn and got out of there before those godless serpents rose up and attack’ded one of us for sure.

But I’ll tell you what else is sump’n! I seem to get more calls than ever about struggling churches and discouraged pastors and I think...man o’man, there is sump’n going on in the church these days, sump’n I can’t quite put my finger on. And

then I think, is it just that old serpent, the devil, slithering around creating havoc and heartache among the people of God? Isn't that why the Word tells us to be on guard against the devil, that ancient serpent, who prowls around looking for someone to devour? Yep, he's up to sump'n and it's time for God's people to stand firm against his evil schemes and pray like never before. At times like this, I cling to that verse in I John, "Greater is he that's in me than he that's in the world." Yep, Satan might be up to sump'n, but God is up to sump'n far greater!