

April 15, 2012

Dear Friends,

The *Titanic* sank one hundred years ago today. Its maiden voyage began on April 10, 1912 from Southampton, England. On the night the world's largest ship sunk the *Titanic* was on the fourth day into its voyage. At 11:40 p.m., the lookout in the crow's nest spotted something he described as darker than night. He rang the crow's nest bell three times, the warning for danger ahead.

It took 37 seconds from the time the alarm was sounded for the world's largest ship to turn slightly to port. It looked as if the *Titanic* just glided by the iceberg. In fact, five of the *Titanic's* sixteen watertight compartments were leaking badly. The ship was doomed.

Captain Edward Smith ordered the lifeboats uncovered at 12:05 a.m. The crew was mustered and the sleeping passengers were summoned from their beds. By 2:20 a.m. it was all over. The *Titanic* sunk beneath the waves. The last image many had was of the *Titanic* standing straight up before plunging straight down.

In *A Night to Remember* (1955) written only forty-three years after the tragedy, the author Walter Lord wrote that only one lifeboat returned to help rescue those who had jumped into the sea. "Of 1600 people who went down on the *Titanic*, only 13 were picked up by the 18 boats that hovered nearby."

Walter Lord said that his book on the famous ship help to raise the question among his readers, "How would I have acted?" Only one lifeboat returned to rescue those who were swimming in the ocean. Why the others did not, Walter Lord said was a "mystery." They could very well have rescued their own husbands or other women and children.

I imagine that one hundred years ago people were raised with a clear understanding of what was right and wrong. The mystery why the survivors in the other lifeboats did not rescue others may be explained by the fact that they were too frightened to act. The whole tragedy took less than three hours. "In boat after boat the story was the same: a timid suggestion, a stronger refusal, nothing done."

We hear today that many Christians don't know right from wrong anymore. The story of the *Titanic* reminds us that good Christian men and women can be too timid in times of great personal challenge. Society seems to demand our silence rather than our voice. Must we be quiet if we do not agree with values contrary to our faith?

Thomas Plante wrote in *Do the Right Thing* (2004) that "Life is full of decisions. Doing the right thing throughout your life will give you peace in the end."