

Fear not, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name and you are mine. Isaiah 43:1b

I'm a huge fan of Have Gun Will Travel. It's vintage TV show that comes on a Houston channel in the mornings. It stars Richard Boone as a gun for hire. He's quick with a draw and looks great in black. His last name is Paladin, but his first name is never given. To this day, he remains simply Paladin.

He is not your usual gunslinger, though. He has values and morals, and he would rather solve a problem with his mind than his gun hand. He often models love and compassion. Sometimes he clashes with the person who hired him because his employer is in the wrong. Many times, someone gets redeemed. He solves the problem and changes the mind of the person in the wrong. There aren't many heroes like Paladin in today's television.

Paladin's genesis story involved his own redemption. He is required to kill a man for a gambling debt. The man was protecting a town that his employer wanted to control. The man, who is dying of a respiratory disease, traps Paladin and holds him hostage. He trains Paladin to take his place, and forces Paladin to kill him. Paladin's own redemption begins when he keeps his employer from returning to the town. From that moment, Paladin is working on his own redemption. For the rest of his life, he is trying to make amends for that one moment.

We often call heroes like Paladin, "Jesus figures." There is one difference, though. While Paladin's work often redeems others, it cannot redeem him. He is caught in a cycle that goes round and round. Jesus was never trying to redeem himself. Jesus never needed redemption. His mission was always our redemption. Jesus had no motive for what he did – except love.

Pastor Parnell