

Daring Greatly

Wayne Waibel – 05/01/2022

The Apostles have been huddled in locked rooms to escape the Sanhedrin in their relentless pursuit of snuffing out all references to and even the simple utterance of the name, Jesus. These eleven men have witnessed the extraordinary ministry of Christ – His triumphant entry into Jerusalem – and finally his brutal and most public execution.

Now they have seen the Master in His resurrected glory, and have been promised the power of the Holy Spirit along with the charge to preach the Gospel to all nations. Were these events to have unfolded during our time, I'm sure we, too, would have been thoroughly challenged in our attempts at understanding and tolerating the agony that comes with daring greatly.

.....

Not only were these guys being sought by a relentless political machine in the form of Imperial Rome – Their own religious hierarchy wanted them silenced also. Jesus, though resurrected, was not among them all the time, so Peter – the natural leader – opted for something to fall back on – namely what they were before being called by Christ – fishermen.

When you are surrounded by so much wonder, confusion, and outright disorientation, you're pretty much left with only what you know as a fall back. They had seen the risen Lord, and knew what they were being called to do, but I'm sure they felt totally lacking in the qualification department. Not an unusual circumstance in the divine working of God. Still – they could not have been less equipped to handle the situation. So why not go fishing?

We think of Jesus as the Son of God the Father. All knowing and all powerful. So how could these men struggle so with their charge? It could be because as Revelation eludes – the Savior derives His power and majesty not from His might, but from His sacrifice. His unwavering love was made manifest in His supreme role as the Lamb – not the Lion – His victory and His glory were embodied in His slaughter and His surrender.

.....

One of the more elusive aspects to our modern day faith is the understanding that all is accomplished according to God's own time, which is not based on our concepts at all. Hence the lack of patience on our part. For us, the notion of delayed gratification has more to do with a twisted sense of entitlement than actual patience.

It's unfathomable to most folks that there would ever be a purpose behind waiting for something of any magnitude to manifest. We have become so focused on results, that the entire journey is lost in the process. We get what we want, and we find it lacking.

There is a very natural process at play in our day-to-day lives. The almost automatic desire to make an end has robbed us of the magnificent forces at play when you allow yourself the time and attention to be in the moment.

So we find ourselves, much as the disciples did, so locked up in our desire to get cracking that we are able only to step out by taking a step back. That's not a wrong move. It's at this point that a step needs to be taken – even if it is a step back. Why not embark on a familiar path?

.....

So Peter gets up and says, "You know what – I'm going fishing." And the unanimous response is, "We're going too." Turns out to be a very good move. And as usual – they don't catch a thing. It's interesting to note that nowhere in the Gospel do the disciples ever catch any fish – unless Christ intervenes. They must've been lousy fishermen...

As the Gospel of John draws to a close, we see the obvious correlations between the fall of grace with Adam and Eve when they discover their own nakedness, and Peter's move to clothe himself when the man on shore is revealed to be the Lord Jesus. Also, Peter's conversation with Jesus that echoes his denial of even knowing Him, matching Christ's charge for him to feed His sheep - three times.

And perhaps the most significant of all the corollaries, sharing breakfast on the beach harkening back to the night He was betrayed. I know that is commonly referred to as the Last Supper. The truth is – this plays out to reinforce the contrary. Jesus is present whenever we join in the breaking of bread. Always and forever.

Luke's narrative in the book of Acts prepares us for the life of ministry to which we are all called. That Jesus would specifically choose one such as Paul to further the mission puts an exclamation point on the purposeful way in which God moves in the world. It is God who changes lives, and when God is the agent of change, all things are possible.

The act of conversion is most aptly illustrated on the road to Damascus, a city of great importance to both the Greco/Roman world, and the Jewish nation. While it is the perfect backdrop for Saul's conversion, the story is less about that and more about the way God works to change lives.

.....

One of the most amazing things about the way God works is the attention to detail. He is at work constantly creating in us – His people – a pure heart. In all of our brokenness, we are never too damaged for God to use us.

It's difficult for us to grasp the gravity of that which is hidden to the world, chiefly the victory won in the death of Christ. Recognizing the supreme sacrifice of the Lamb that was slaughtered, we find our own path to worthiness. Insecure, self-doubting human beings cannot hear that message enough.

The beauty of the book of Revelation is not in its imagery and mystery or even its dynamic narrative – typical of the author, John. It is in its simplicity. The full title is "The Revelation of Jesus Christ," and it is first and foremost exactly that. I know that the vast majority of impressions find the book a prophetic tapestry of the post-apocalyptic world we have yet to see.

The theologian John along with other New Testament theologians make it clear that the great apocalyptic events lay behind in the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus – not ahead.

Whatever lies ahead pales in comparison to the events around the cross, which reveal the very heart of God. And that includes His intent for us. Which is why we engage in worship. It is worship that shapes the human community in response to the God of Jesus Christ.

We stand to inherit a world of immeasurable abundance precisely because that is what God created us for. It's easy to lose sight of that in the face of all the obstacles we must endure and find some way of overcoming. But we have an amazing potential.

We have the potential for great faith. The kind of faith that takes the insight shown by the beloved disciple who singularly recognized the man on the beach as their Lord Jesus Christ, and the courage to act as demonstrated by Peter who immediately jumped into the sea and went to Him.

Sometimes we are the manifestation of these two faiths in our drive for acceptable service. And that service can best be activated in our willingness to embrace the diverse theologies that make up life in this time and in this place.

We still celebrate Easter, and we still struggle with our impetuous nature. But the natural character of our God is a joy made complete in the life, death, and resurrection of one Jesus of Nazareth. A carpenter's son who gave more thought to you and to me now, than He did to His own life, then. Amen.