Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Viva la Revolucion! – Week 29

Welcome to the Revolution.

Day 196: The greatest miracle

Ok, I've been baptized.

Well praise the Lord! This is perhaps the greatest of all miracles.

Really? Why? I thought being raised from the dead or even a miraculous healing would be more impressive.

More impressive maybe, but not greater. You've just explicitly identified that you are a child of God, and committed to serving God, putting aside your own self-interest. Truly, this is a great miracle. You've broken through to the reality that God loves you, and that God has defined for us a path of life that you can live. You have found freedom in that, putting aside your self-interest, you need never fear death or failure again. All you need to do is live with God. The miracle is that you've changed from living your specific perspective and interests to being open to God's perspective and desiring to do His will in every situation.

You have given God our Father great, great joy.

I don't notice much difference from my end …

Think back to where you started with us. You have truly, come a long way. I was wondering if you would come this far. You have grown greatly.

I guess the main thing from when I began is that I feel … more peaceful maybe. More accepting. Loved. I accept that though I don't have all the answers, though I may never understand reality in its fullness in this life, I don't have to – I am loved anyway, and can live just in that. I will still have many struggles and issues and problems – and that's ok. God IS, God loves me, God loves everyone, and that is where I now live.

Wonderful. Awesome. Fantastic. Excuse me, I think I may cry a little here.

Every person's journey is different. If you have been baptized, describe your journey of faith to get there, and since. If you haven't been baptized, describe where you presently are in your faith and belief in God.

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 197: Affirmation

What do you remember most from your baptism service?

I guess what struck me most was the reaction of the people to my comments.

What were your comments?

The minister asked me to share why I thought God wanted me to be baptized, why I wanted to be baptized, and then what I thought was in it for the church – you know, the same questions you asked.

What was the reaction?

Some people started crying. Some smiled, some applauded. Some seemed insecure or upset. One person glared at me and walked out of the building!

Wow. Why do you think it struck such an emotional response?

Perhaps for some people it affirmed their own baptism, maybe. Perhaps for some, it challenged them – maybe more than they could take, in that one person's case.

I think you may have something there. Jesus had very similar reactions in His time, and He still does today. Overall, your baptism affirms the existence of the church as the Temple of God, the Bride of Christ. Your baptism affirms the church not only for you, but for the current members as well – it reminds them of God's grace and call on all our lives. Each of them is the church, wholly and indivisible – and all together, they are the church. This is the great affirmation baptism gives.

Is everyone aware of this or believe this?

On an explicit level, hardly anyone. But from a spiritual reality, it is true. When God beholds His church, He beholds you and He beholds everyone together.

How does someone else getting baptized affirm <u>your</u> baptism? How does it challenge you?

Share your answers with others whom you trust.

Day 198: What's next?

What's next?

Viva la Revolución!

Eh?

Long live the Revolution! You have joined the revolution of God. The revolution began with the baptism of Christ, and truly took off with His resurrection. It continues with your baptism and subsequent life in Christ.

Ummm… what revolution?

I was hoping you'd ask that question! What is the ultimate aim of God? What's God's desired state with us?

To have everyone live with Him in "shalom" – peace, wholeness, completeness, health, wellness, etc.

Yes. What is the current state of most of humanity?

Many still live in hunger, without security, housing or even clothing. Many live in fear and anger. Many live under war conditions (recognized or not). Many live barricaded in their houses to prevent others from intruding on them. Many are wanting to force others to change, and kill them if they don't change. Many live anxious for their future, even the future of humanity.

Yes. How do we get from the current state to the desired state?

I was going to say "I have no idea." But that's not totally true. Through each person going through a path like I have, from pursuing the ways of the world to pursuing God's way?

That is the Way. One person at a time. One baptism at a time. One changed life at a time. One resurrection-life at a time. You are correct.

This scares me.

Rightfully so. The short answer of "how do we do this" is "Jesus." The long answer is "through you." That is why I declared that you have joined the revolution. You are part of the Temple of God, and make no mistake, you are out to change the world.

Isn't that rather presumptuous?

It's very presumptuous if you declare "I am the Way." It is actually very humble if you declare "Jesus is the Way – and I follow Him."

How do you follow Jesus? Give some examples from the past week.

Share your answers with others whom you trust

Day 199: The Revolution Starts

So how do we do this?

Remember all the sessions we had on the Path of Life, the Way of Christ?

Yes.

That's where we start. The same place where Jesus' first students started with Him. It may be good for you to review those sessions.

Ok…

Jesus' first students thought that was what it was all about. They would walk the Way of Christ, and God would usher in His New Heavens and Earth, and they would rule humanity with Jesus. They had arguments with each other over who would be the greatest in God's Kingdom, and given the "highest" position. Until something terrible happened.

What was that?

Jesus died. Was murdered, actually.

On the cross.

You know the story! Yes. After Jesus' crucifixion, the followers of Jesus were disconsolate, thinking it was all over. It was a complete disaster. As two on them were quoted, "Our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel." Then, something amazing happened.

Jesus' resurrection. Did that <u>really</u> happen?

This was unbelievable to people of Jesus' time as well. The follower Paul wrote:

"Now if Christ is being preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is futile and your faith is empty. Also, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified against God that he raised Christ from the dead, when in reality he did not raise him, if indeed the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is useless; you are still in your sins. Furthermore, those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. For if only in this life we have hope in Christ, we should be pitied more than anyone." (1st Corinthians 15:12-19)

An important thing to understand: many people in the time of Jesus thought there would be resurrection of the dead, but it would be for all the people of God, at the end of time, when God

ushers in His Kingdom in its totality, His new Heaven and Earth. Here was a puzzle – God had resurrected … one person.

If the resurrection of the people of God announced the inauguration of His Kingdom on earth, what possibly could the resurrection of *one* person mean, for that person and for the Kingdom?

Share your answer with others whom you trust.

Day 200: The Revolution (continued)

The first followers of Christ frankly had no idea what the resurrection of Christ meant, so Christ had to tell them. As recorded in the Good News written by Luke:

Jesus said to them, "You foolish people—how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Wasn't it necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things written about himself in all the scriptures.

So, what message did they hear from Him?

We all (humanity through the ages) have missed the mark of God's holiness and Path of Life (ie: sinned). God promised to save humanity (many times, actually, as you read scripture). God presented the faithful Anointed One, His own self-revelation, whose death is our Exodus (path from slavery and death to the promised land of living with God, in shalom).

How is His death our path to freedom and life?

You ask such great questions! Simply put, God's plan to rescue humanity from sin and death is accomplished in Christ.

1.) The new Passover had taken place – through Jesus, God sacrificed himself to humanity to satisfy all the rage, hurt, anger, ego, pride, and selfishness of humanity, had taken that into Himself, in an act of enduring, steadfast, love.
2.) In taking all this evil into Himself and subjecting Himself to it, God freed all people who accept it – freed them from their past sins, freed to join the covenant family of God. Freed to look forward to the full culmination of God's creation, one-ness with God in the New Heaven and Earth, knowing that they are not condemned, but loved.
3.) In this freedom, the exile from the Way of God is ended. All of Christ's followers are now able to fully live according to the Way of God, and not to the Ways of the World (recognizing that the Ways of the World fully surround them still).
4.) In accepting the ramifications of all the ways we have trespassed God's love, God renders the powers of the earth (death, fear, greed, etc.) empty of all power and authority over us. Even if they kill us (they still have some capability!), we need not fear them – for we are held tight in the hand of God (they have no power or authority).

In other words, the loving, generous, creator God gave His very own self for the life of the world. He died, so we may live. The darkest of dark powers has been defeated, and we, its captives, are now free.

In God's gift of Himself through Christ, you are free from all that is evil. You are free from death itself. What does that mean to you?

Share your thoughts with others whom you trust.

Day 201: The Revolution Continues

After Jesus' resurrection, the understanding of the disciples changed from "we shall walk the Way of Christ, and God will usher in His New Heavens and Earth, and we shall rule humanity with Jesus." The world had changed and they now lived in a different place.

The resurrection of Jesus means that the darkest and strongest power in the world, the power of death itself, is defeated. In its place, a new and different power has been unleashed into the world. *This is a glorious new beginning.*

As the early followers looked back at Jesus' kingdom-launching career and His death, they reached the conclusion that His death itself had been the ultimate victory. But there was something weird about the timing.

Oh?

The death didn't cause the end of the "present age" (evil is still all around us), but seems to be right in the middle of it. This could only mean that God's rescue plan is a two-stage plan.

Oh?

The first stage is the life, death, and resurrection of the Christ. The second stage is for the followers of Christ. In the words of Bishop N.T. Wright, "The Great Jailer had been overpowered; now someone had to go and unlock the prison doors." Jesus' death and resurrection launched the revolution – it's up to us to participate in it.

In place of death ruling over humanity and the world, what new and glorious power do you think has been unleashed through the death of Christ?

Share your thoughts with those you trust

Day 202: Rest

We come again to the seventh day, so today we rest. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you.