

What is Jesus Doing?

GET JESUS ON YOUR BOAT

Today at noon, I had the pleasure of giving the Word and loving the flock at Hope of The Valley Rescue Mission's new headquarters at my old stomping grounds, the Central Lutheran Church in Van Nuys. HOTV took over what was an old Lutheran Social Services suite of offices on the church property and is helping the church (which is a small but powerful congregation of mostly homeless folks) to survive.

For 12+ years, that location had a lunch for the homeless every Thursday, and it was my joy to be the preacher and chaplain to the flock there as a volunteer with another local Rescue Mission. That location has a huge spiritual and emotional draw for me. For one thing, that was the feeding where I first laid eyes on my now wife, Donna. (here I will digress) She was talking to a friend of mine who is a poster-child for crazy homeless people, replete with scrambled egg hair, a giant beard, and eyes that bug out of his head when he talks, and especially when he laughs. What Donna, a newbie volunteer to this meal, couldn't know was that my friend was and still is, a saint and a soldier of the Most High God's Army and I know his works. The fact that he is schizophrenic does not impair his usefulness as a Holy and sanctified vessel. Still, there was this lovely blonde woman serving and interacting with my friend like they were at a cocktail party, and I saw that this beautiful, pristine lady was engaged with my crazy friend with love and true interest. I made a mental note that I had never seen anyone so powerfully attractive because of the goodness of her heart, and went up to give the Word.

As it happens, the Word I gave that day, 9 or so years ago, was the same one I gave today at the same location. Get Jesus on Your Boat. It goes like this... (in a nutshell)

Several of the Gospels tell the story of Jesus, after the feeding of the 5000, going off to a mountain by Himself to pray, and telling the disciples to meet Him at Capernaum. As they got into their small fishing boat, and had rowed a short way, a storm came up on the sea and they were very afraid.

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Now many of us, if not all of us (and certainly all of my homeless friends) have gone, or are going through a storm at some time in their lives. It might be a financial storm, it might be a health storm, it might be a family betrayal storm, a divorce storm, emotional, mental, the list goes on...

The Gospels of Mark and Matthew tell us that they then saw Jesus walking on the storm (not just walking on smooth water, mind you, but upon the storm) and they were afraid because they thought He was a ghost!

Sidebar here... perhaps it is because the disciples were still trying to figure Jesus out. Was He God or was He just a really smart and charismatic guy? Perhaps they thought He was a ghost because something had happened to Him while He was away from them (the crowd had been pressing Him very heavily after the feeding after all).

In any case, then all three Gospels agree that Jesus draws near to them and says "Be not afraid, it is I."

Now the Gospel of John's version fascinates me. In John's Gospel it goes like this..."Then they willingly received Him into the boat, and immediately the boat was at the land where they were going."

Wow! So they WILLINGLY received Him into the boat and they were IMMEDIATELY where they were going. Now THAT is a Word to live by. So... whatever the storm we are going through, which may be a trial that God is allowing to deepen us, or it may just be something that is just part of life here in the Valley of the shadow of death, if we willingly bring the Lord into the situation, we will have the peace and even the joy of the Lord (our strength) to withstand and eventually overcome, the length of the trial. That is basically the Word I gave back ten years ago and again today.

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I ended the Word by asking if anyone felt that they needed Jesus to come on their boat today, and if so, said I would be happy and blessed to go before the Throne of Grace with them in prayer.

When I gave the general prayer and blessed the meal after giving the Word, this one guy comes up to me whom I had not seen before. He had been drinking and his demeanor was contrite. He said to me that the Word had touched him deeply and that he wanted to reconnect with Jesus. I prayed a Holy Spirit prayer over him for a long time, which revealed that he had wandered in the weeds but had never lost sight of Jesus, he was just staying back because of shame.

At the end of the prayer I looked up and he was crying. I asked him if he wanted to be an effective servant of Jesus and a soldier with the full Armor of God. He said yes and I prayed the Armor on him, welded on with the Blood of Christ. Then I asked him if he had a Bible, and he told me that he had just had his only copy stolen the week before. I inscribed the Bible that I gave him (I'm a Gideon for this purpose) with what the Lord showed me is the true Soldier's Commission...

"Watch. Stand fast in the faith. Be brave. Be strong. All you do, let it be done in love."

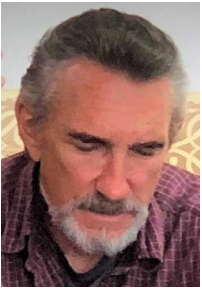
- 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

When I left him, (now sober and I hope, resolved), with the promise of seeing him again next Friday, I turned around and saw a soldier from the past who had just gotten out of prison and his Armor was in total disarray. He too, was in tears, and I prayed his Armor back on and began the process of setting him up with a Christian recovery program I know where he can get his strength back.

I saw and prayed with a number of other old friends today, and it was a spiritual and emotional time and a blessing to me across the board.

Today, THAT is what Jesus is doing. I look forward to seeing what He has in store for me tomorrow (Ephesians 2:10).

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*Blessings to the saints now and forever,
- John Henry Raskin, Roadhouse Rabbi*