

Downward Ascent 8: Woeful Well-Being

'Woe to you when all men speak well of you...' (LK 6:26)

'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.' (Matt. 5:10)

Being hated for loving Jesus means you are doing something right. Authentic peacemakers provoke war. Jesus may wash feet, defend children, empower women, and cure lepers but He also mirrors the truth of our sin (JN 15: 18-25). His reflection so unsettled the religious and political figures of His day that they smashed that mirror every way they could. His disciples might expect the same. The servant is not greater than his master.

I refer to the backlash prompted by authentic righteousness, not self-righteous bluster. A pagan friend roughed me up in the early days of my conversion when I was prone to quoting Scripture in faux dulcet tones. I deserved to be decked--religion was making me insufferable. That differed from the gossip that surrounded me when I pulled away from gay friends. Although I was sorely tempted to serve both God and Baal, I knew that the former demanded loyalty.

Jesus makes us very unpopular. How else do you explain Mozilla/Firefox Chief (Silicon Valley magnate) Brendan Eich who resigned under pressure when it became known that a few years earlier he gave \$1000 in support of Proposition 8? A popular gay website posted this about Eich and anyone who stands for marriage: 'For enforcing misery, shame, and frustration, you are our enemies, and we wish you nothing but failure.'

Be forewarned: the 'gay marriage' machine has just begun to steamroll opponents. Note that its energy is essentially 'anti-Christ.' To reconfigure marriage means a failure to recognize both the context and purpose of sexual love as advocated by Jesus Himself. (Matt. 19:4-6) People hate chastity and genuine fruitfulness; for all their talk about wanting 'gay marriage,' gay activists hate marriage. Blessed are those persecuted for upholding the righteousness of marriage. Blessed is Brendan and blessed are we.

Two years ago, a global gay-rights group did some research and discovered that Desert Stream Ministries was the source of the Living Waters Training week, which are currently being sponsored in nations throughout the earth. These activists never inquired of us but saw fit to launch a virtual smear campaign throughout the globe, using ads to describe our trainings as coercive and based on the premise that one begins the week with their 'gay dial' on and we claim to change the dial to 'straight.' All in 7 days! (Preposterous, as the training is for lay leaders being equipped to run church groups.)

Using this visual 'dial' image and a paragraph of pure lies, they amassed nearly one million signatures online against us. They submitted these signatures to governments around the world and requested that these nations shut us down for the sake of human rights.

The result? Governments around the world warned our constituents in those nations to distance themselves from us or else. It worked. Colleagues whom we had served on their soil for decades put up fire-walls from us to preserve their ministries.

Those who rejoice in the Cross must also be willing to endure the cross He asks us to bear. Consider the promises you make. Those who enter through the Crucified must share in that suffering. Heaven asks it of us.

From what aspect of Jesus' righteousness do you seek to distance yourself? What cross do you avoid to maintain peace? As we enter Holy Week, be aware of your own 'Hosannas.' Will your love endure beyond the palms and hymns? Will you go the distance with Him to Calvary?

Edith Stein was a German Jewish convert who became a Carmelite nun. She exhorted her sisters with these words before being killed by the Nazis:

'Will you remain faithful to the Crucified? Consider carefully! The world is in flames, the battle between Christ and Antichrist has broken out into the open. If you decide for Christ, it could cost you your life. Carefully consider what you promise.'

PRAYER for Sunday April 13th: 'On this Palm Sunday, we rejoice that You choose to dwell with us, Humble King, the Prince of Peace. At the same time, we know that our hearts are not much different from the disciples who loved You during the parade and rejected You in the persecution to come. Have mercy on our fickle hearts.'

PRAYER for Monday April 14th: 'Reveal any "peace at any price" tendency in us. Show us how we adjust the truth to look good before men rather than before God. As we approach the Cross this week, make us true.'

PRAYER for Tuesday April 15th: 'Jesus, grant us the grace to distinguish rejection based on righteousness rather than rude, proud behavior. We turn from truth without love. Amplify truth-in-love. Remind us of the intimacy reserved for those who endure alienation from others for Your sake.'

PRAYER for Wednesday April 16th: 'Father, show us any person or issue toward which we fear to be the truth. Grant us the love to include others in the whole of Your Gospel: crucifixion unto resurrection. Forgive us for wanting You only in the joy of new life and not in the grief of letting go. Forgive us for rejoicing in only one aspect of Your Cross and actually hating the other. Help us to love all that You are as we approach Calvary.'