

From Dave's Laptop

Tuesday, April 8, 2014

Do you remember what you were doing on Thursday, April 7, 1994? I was probably teaching classes at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

It was on that day that the “hundred days” of the Rwandan Genocide began, a horror in which somewhere between 500,000 and 1,000,000 Rwandans were murdered. Planned by high-ranking members of the government and carried out by the army and government-sponsored militia groups, the genocide destroyed 70% of the country’s Tutsi population and 20% of the whole population of the nation.

Now, twenty years later, Rwandans attempt to move forward together, though deep scars remain. I listened to an NPR interview today of a Hutu woman who sheltered several Tutsi, saving their lives at the risk of her own life and the lives of her own family. And as I listened to her story, I wondered what I would have done.



I wondered that same question yesterday, as I read the story of Gideon in Judges. God’s angel came to Gideon and told him to destroy his father’s pagan altar and “*build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God*” (Judges 6:26). Gideon did as the angel instructed, but he did it at night, because he was afraid of the reaction of his neighbors . . . who did indeed attempt to kill him the next day. What do you think you would have done, given those instructions?

Pick your biblical character, whether Abram, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Ruth, or Mary. With few exceptions, God’s call to the heroes and heroines of our faith was to do things that would very quickly put their lives in jeopardy. What would we have done?

Pick more recent heroes. Dr. King surely knew what the end of the story would be when he engaged the juggernaut of racism in this land. He could have said, “Thanks, but no thanks” . . . but he didn’t. Coretta could have tried to stop him, but apparently she didn’t.

According to Wikipedia, “Courage is the ability and willingness to confront fear, pain, danger, uncertainty, or intimidation. Physical courage is courage in the face of physical pain, hardship, death, or threat of death, while moral courage is the ability to act rightly in the face of popular opposition, shame, scandal, or discouragement.”

As I ponder all this, I think of Julius Caesar’s words in Shakespeare’s play of that name: “A coward dies a thousand deaths, but the valiant taste of death but once.” And I recall Albert Schweitzer’s words: “He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old by the lake-side, He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: ‘Follow thou me!’ and sets us to the tasks which He has to fulfill for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as in ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is.”¹

May God make us equal to the challenges of our own time.

¹Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, 3rd. ed., trans. W. Montgomery (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1954), p. 401.

On another subject, I want to give you more information about our worship schedule for the next couple of weeks. The schedule of services will be as follows:

Palm Sunday: “The Idea of a Miracle”

Wednesday: no services (Choir and Deacons will meet)

Maundy Thursday: An Unusual and Holy Experience

Good Friday: Combined service at 7 p.m. with our *ConeXiones* Hispanic partners. Pastor Rolando Castro will be preaching.

Resurrection Day

0730 SonRise Worship: “Miracles in the Bible”

0830 Pot Luck Brunch

1000 Resurrection Worship: “The Grand Miracle”

April 27: Dr. Fausto Vasconcelos from the Baptist World Alliance will be our preacher

May 4: “Miracles Today”

An Unusual and Holy Experience: What we’ll do on Maundy Thursday bears a bit more explanation.

You probably know that “Maundy Thursday” gets its name from John 13:34-35, where Jesus told His disciples, “A **new command** I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” “New command” is *mandatum novum* in Latin, and “Maundy” is derived from *mandatum*. “Maundy,” then, is a reminder that we are to love one another.

You may also remember that prior to giving this new command, Jesus had washed His disciples’ feet, after which He told them, “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (John 13:13-15).



Rightly or wrongly, apart from our Primitive Baptist cousins, Baptists have not generally made a regular practice of foot washing, not believing this command to be of the same sort as Jesus’ words about baptism and the Lord’s Supper. It may well be, therefore, that you have never witnessed or participated in such a service; but you’ll have an opportunity to do that on Maundy Thursday next week.

This service will be held in the Chapel at 7 p.m. After a time of singing, we’ll receive communion together, and then those who wish to do so will experience “foot washing.” **It will be possible to**

attend this service and to receive communion without participating in the foot washing experience, though you may wish to observe it.

“Foot washing” in this sense is not really “washing,” so if you wish to participate, please come with clean feet. All we’ll use is warm water and towels.

Women will wash women’s feet, and men will wash men’s feet. We’ll have two or three stations set up with two chairs each, so several people can be participating at one time. (Women, please remember not to wear stockings, panty hose, etc.)

Both persons will remove their own socks and shoes, and then we’ll take turns pouring water over the other person’s feet, one foot at a time, and then drying each foot with a towel. Then we’ll change roles. Everything you’ll need will be provided (bowls, pitchers, water, towels).

Most people who experience foot washing—and generally those who observe it as well—report that this is a powerful spiritual experience of humility and care.

One more thing. Jill and I went to see the *Noah* movie on Sunday afternoon. As is true with most movies that have a biblical theme, this movie has received widely varying reviews, some describing it as sinister and pagan, while others find it thought-provoking.

I’ve read several reviews of both sorts, and I’ve provided links to the ones I suggest that you read below. The bottom line, in my opinion, is that while this film is loosely built upon the story in Genesis, this is not really a biblical film. It’s a cataclysmic adventure film with moral overtones of sorts.

The most helpful critical blogs I read were these:

- <http://drbrianmattson.com/journal/2014/3/31/sympathy-for-the-devil>
- www.answersingenesis.org/articles/noah-movie/detailed-review

And the most helpful semi-positive blogs I read were these:

- www.patheos.com/blogs/filmchat/2014/04/no-noah-is-not-agnostic-say-that-ten-times-fast.html
- www.patheos.com/blogs/filmchat/2014/04/be-as-wise-as-serpents-but-stay-away-from-snakeskins.html



Next Week: The Blood Moon & The Day of the Cross



The Joshua Code: Fifty-Two Verses Every Believer Should Know **O.S. Hawkins (Thomas Nelson, 2012)**

Week fourteen:

*From that time on Jesus began to preach,
“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near”
(Matthew 4:17).*

“There seems to be a forgotten word in our Christian vocabulary. The word? *Repentance*. The call to repent is strangely absent today. Some think it should be relegated to some tent service in the country, yet it was the message of all the prophets.

“It was the message of John the Baptist as he preached in the wilderness (Matthew 3: 1–2). It was the message with which the Lord Jesus commenced His ministry (Matthew 4:17). It was also the message with which He concluded His ministry (Luke 24:46–47). It was the message of the apostles as they preached and later scattered throughout the known world (Mark 6:12).

“It was the message that birthed the church at Pentecost (Acts 2:37– 38). It was the missionary message of the apostle Paul (Acts 17:30). And, in the last book of the Bible, it is the message of John the Revelator on Patmos to the churches of Asia (Revelation 2:5). In fact, this call to repent is woven throughout the tapestry of the entire Bible on almost every page.

“*Repentance* is not only one of the forgotten words of our time but also one of the most misunderstood. What really is repentance? How is it applied to our lives? These are legitimate questions that deserve a definitive response in a Christian world that, in some places, is more concerned about being “seeker friendly” than biblically literate and legitimate.

JESUS’ PERSONAL MANDATE COMMANDS IT “*Repent*”

Repentance is not remorse. It is not simply being sorry for our sin. The rich young ruler went away “sorrowful,” but he didn’t repent (Luke 18:23). Repentance is not regret, or merely wishing that the deed had not happened. Pontius Pilate, who betrayed the Lord, washed his hands in regret over his turning Christ over to the crowds (Matthew 27:24). Repentance is not resolve. It is not like a New Year’s resolution where we resolve to take on a new set of moral standards. And repentance is not reform—it’s not just turning over a new leaf. Judas Iscariot reformed. He took the thirty pieces of silver, the payment for his betrayal of Jesus, and flung them down the corridors of the temple. Judas reformed, but he did not repent (Matthew 27:3).

Repentance comes from a Greek word that literally means “to change one’s mind.” It is a change of mind that affects a change of will and, in turn, brings about a change of action.

JESUS’ POSITIVE MOTIVE COMMENDS IT “for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”

