

A Few Spiritual Reflections On The Sydney Siege.

Satan, Siege, Survival **16.12.12**

Post Trauma Reflections

God has been speaking to his Church through the hostage siege in Sydney. If we have ears to hear him the Lord is speaking powerfully to draw the comfortable Western Church into the dynamics of his kingdom. This has everything to do with the unseen spiritual world and nothing *essentially* to do with militant Islam, or any other ideology. We are being drawn by the Spirit to a much deeper engagement with cosmic struggle between the victorious Jesus and the satanic dominion of darkness (Rev 12). Clarity about such things comes only through suffering.

The Martyr Church

From the Gospels on the Church of the New Testament is a suffering Church; ““Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. *I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.* For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a person's enemies will be those of his own household...whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. *Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*”” (Matthew 10:34-39 ESV). Our struggle to come to terms with terrible events spanning Sydney to Syria reflects our loss of insight into the ongoing spiritual warfare between Christ and Satan (Col 1:13). Whether blatant or subtle the satanic purpose is constant. If the devil cannot kill the body of a believer he will seek to destroy his/her testimony to Jesus. This is where the hostage crisis in Sydney has a message for the physically safe Australian Church.

The Struggle to Survive

Just as the tragic death of a single young cricketer sent a shockwave of grief across the continent so a lone gunman in a coffee shop sent a tsunami of terror across our nation. Australians are in severe trauma because they have lost hope in resurrection from the dead. *Terror only works on people who are frightened to die.* The devil is laughing at the success of his power to inspire fear in easy-going Aussies. The only one who can abolish such fears is the Saviour; “who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel”. (2 Tim 1:10). Jesus came to “destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.” (Hebrews 2:14-15 ESV). As long as Australians “love life” and see themselves as survivors they are easy prey for Satan’s fear-inducing schemes.

Overcoming droughts, depressions and wars our national instinct for survival is strong, but *this instinct must die* if Christ is to reign amongst us. The prophetic word is clear; “they have conquered him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for *they loved not their lives even unto death.*” (Rev 12:11). Only when our survival instinct has been broken can we live without fear and radiate resurrection hope to a terror-struck generation. The Lord is speaking about why such hope is presently *not* radiating through his Church. This involves a strong challenge to the aspect of our spirituality where we are most internationally renowned: our “worship”.

Worship Prepares us to Die

“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives....and they went to a place called Gethsemane” (Mark 14:26, 32). On the threshold of mortal suffering Jesus *needed to worship his Father as a preparation for death*. He needed to be strengthened by the Word in worship so that he could die in fullness of faith.

The intense concentration of hymns recorded in Revelation exists to bring the saints on earth into the heavenly atmosphere of adoration preparing them to live faithfully as a martyr Church (5:9-12; 14:2; 15:2-3). Only as we submit to worship as a means of strengthening our willingness to sacrifice all for Christ can the reality of the “Lamb standing as slain” become real to our hearts (5:6). Only as we abandon worship as a feel-good motivational entertainment exercise, or even as a matter of individual encouragement, can we know in the Spirit that we are one with the circle of holy worshippers adoring the “Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world” (13:8). For us Jesus chose not to survive the threat of dying, and if we are to live by resurrection power we too must embrace the ultimate weakness of death (Mark 14:36; 2 Cor 13:4). If the Lord does not privilege us with physical martyrdom at the very least he will grace us with death to self (Rev 14:12-15).

Die to Rise

Galatians 2:20 is a great favourite, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” (cf. 6:14; Phil 3:10 etc.). But where is this dying to self being visibly lived out in the Australian Church? The crises in Syria, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan etc. falling on our persecuted brothers and sisters should shake the foundations of our comfortable Western life-style. Jesus still cries out to his tormentors ““why are you persecuting me?”” (Acts 9:4; Heb 12:26-28). Yet who is hearing his cries today? More shaking is coming so that we might die to self and bear a fearless testimony to those bound in terror. The Christian witness of the “living dead” is well summed up by this quote:

“The man who has died to self ...has no ambitions - and has nothing to be jealous about. He has no reputation – and so has nothing to fight about. He has no possessions – and therefore, nothing to worry about. He has no rights – so therefore he cannot suffer any wrong. He is already dead-so no one can kill him.” (Ravenhill) When the streets, offices, homes, factories, schools and cities of our nation are filled with those who through death to self now live in the resurrection power of Christ we will have revival!

Conclusion

Seen in the spiritual realm the siege in Sydney is not about an Islamic threat to our national security and Western way of life. It is about dying to all worldly dependencies. We must not allow our survival instincts to rule us. The depth of the spiritual reformation the Spirit is calling for in the Church is enormous. *Perhaps* we can sense the depth of the Spirit’s call as we ponder the traumas of the last few days through the lens of Christ crucified. By stepping aside from the anaesthetising influences of popular Christian music and the hypnotic tones of success driven preachers and turning to hear the Spirit crying out through the persecuted Church we can know what the Lord is saying to the churches (Rev 2:7). The voice of Jesus is abundantly clear, “*whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it.*” (Mark 8:35).