

Within Us

Wayne Waibel – 07/21/2024

Try to wrap your head around that. “And as many as touched Him were made well.” Say, for instance, a young woman with juvenile diabetes so bad she has lost her eyesight, kidney function and all feeling in her lower extremities simply touches his robe – and is restored to full health.

Multiply that by however many people have heard the good news of this Messiah, and you start to get an idea of how world-shattering Jesus was. Now fast forward to 2024, where tales of this Jesus continue to circulate but the kingdom of which He speaks exists only in the periphery of true believers. The vast majority of human-kind rolls on oblivious to His reign. The Good Lord must be exhausted.

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Upon their return from their first foray into the world of ministry, the disciples are understandably weary. Jesus invites them to come away with Him to the wilderness to rest and replenish.

But the throngs will not let that happen. They anticipate where Jesus and His disciples are going and rush to beat them there. The word of Jesus has spread rapidly, and people literally run to meet Him. When He sees the multitude as He tries to get away for a bit with His disciples, He looks upon them and feels compassion.

The precondition for compassion is unconditional solidarity with the ones for whom you feel it. Despite the fact that He and His men are bone-tired – His actions are governed by the multitude that follows, not the exhaustion He feels to His core. Like a Good Shepherd – He tends to the flock.

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Moses was a shepherd. David was a shepherd. Jesus was the Supreme Shepherd. There's just something about that life that holds a special place in God's heart.

God has very specific expectations for those who possess power. The privilege of power is always accompanied by the responsibility of attending to the people.

No wonder Jeremiah relays God's displeasure at the reigning rulers of ancient Israel. In fact – he considers their treatment of the people – evil. That's right – evil. I wonder how our current crop of world leaders are measuring up...

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The church is a holy experiment in reconciliation. In fact – the word church does not mean a building, but is instead a synonym for a reconciled community. So, the world does have recourse from the brutality and blatant unfairness that ravages our planet. And it is within us. Each of us, and all of us.

People who live together after hostility form the kind of community in which God abides. That is His thing – we are His people. "It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves."

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The peace of Christ is a shocking new reality in which former enemies who would not touch or eat with one another, now reach out to one another in recognition of their common humanity. That is the world God envisioned. That is the kingdom of God on earth, as it is in heaven.

The final word from our God is always hope. The battering we endure at the hands of evil in the world amounts to little more than a passing moment in the grand scheme of things.

When we grow weary of the strain of life, we are reminded of our Lord and the rest He was almost never afforded throughout His ministry. And we are grateful that He stayed the course, and completed His mission to the very end – for our redemption.

Yes – we need to “Come aside by ourselves to a deserted place and rest a while,” from time to time. But we can also soldier on through the bleakness. Because we recognize that peace has already been achieved – even if the rest of the world has not. Amen.