

Dark and Stormy Night

“It was a dark and stormy night”. So would begin the novel that the Comic strip character Snoopy in the Peanuts comic strip would write. To the best of my knowledge, Snoopy never went beyond this statement with his novel, unless, if memory serves me correctly, he also used the phrase “suddenly a shot rang out”. Both phrases are harbingers of more suspense to come.

The dark and stormy night prediction came true on October 12, 1962. Residents of the Portland, Oregon Metropolitan area referred, to the mild hurricane which struck the area as “the Columbus day storm”. It left, in its wake, a large metropolitan area without electric power for a significant period of time. It also left behind significant storm damage. For the most part, the Columbus Day Storm caught Portlanders unprepared, and surrounded by situations with which they were, to say the least, unfamiliar.

People coped with the disaster as best as they could. Families who formerly were simply a group of people who lived together huddled together in a supportive group. Help agencies cooperated, and public agencies pitched in to pull Northwest Oregon up by its boot straps to assist in regaining full functioning as a society. It took decades of effort on the part of all citizens in the affected communities to regain what the hurricane had destroyed. The physical repair of destruction was eventually accomplished; the emotional trauma was permanently etched in the psyche of those who lived here at the time. Concomitantly, we are encouraged by how everyone pitched in to help in a true concern for others.

Jesus came to the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and, while crossing to the other side, was faced with gale force winds which arose suddenly. He calmed the storm by speaking to it, and then rebuked the disciples for their timidity and lack of faith[i]. The Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are filled with example after example of the Power of Jesus Christ over sickness, demons, narrow mindedness, hunger, restrictive practices, and death. Jesus’ life and ministry was dedicated to the premise that even though all mankind were sinners, He, alone, is the means to salvation[ii].

We are told that this very same Jesus is God incarnate and was responsible for the whole of creation; He brought the Light and the Life of God into the dark world[iii]. The darkness was due to the sin which existed in the world[iv]. In spite of this sin, or rather because of it, God chose to send His only begotten Son into the world to die once and for all for the sins of mankind[v]. As a result, even though we are all sinners[vi], and deserve the penalty of death, we are still graciously granted life eternal in Jesus Christ[vii].

Just as a community pulls together after a tragic and devastating force of nature to repair the damage and get back to productive life, so the destroyed aspects of a sin filled life can be repaired by turning this life over to Jesus Christ. He can turn the sinner to a saved soul, the reprobate into a proselyte servant of God.

The book of Romans tells us to make our bodies a living sacrifice[viii]. This means that we are to live our lives as a form of worship, paying homage to God, Whose blood sacrifice on the cross has set us free from sin[ix].

What does this new freedom in Christ do for us? Are we given a sort of carte blanche to sin at will? No, the freedom we have gives us the opportunity to serve Him, rather than to be slaves to a legalistic system where we have the responsibility to live a life which is ritualistically pure. Our slavery is to the One Who sets us free to serve in righteousness. We now have the opportunity and freedom of turning to Him at any time, in any condition, in any situation, regardless; not because we are pure on our own, but because His blood makes us pure if we only believe in Him as our Lord and Savior.

[i] Mark 4: 35-41

[iii] John 1:1-5

[v] John 3:16-19

[vii] Romans 6:23

[ix] Romans 6: 15-22

[ii] John 14:6

[iv] John 3:19

[vi] Romans 3:23

[viii] Romans 12:1