

Monday Morning Rewind – December 29, 2008

Happy last Monday of 2008. Are you ready to get on with the mission in 2009? If so, it means letting go of past.

On Sabbath we observed Jesus getting ready to leave his disciples to return to heaven. They hated to see Him go. I'm sure they felt like the revival was over, but it was really just beginning. They couldn't imagine what was coming next.

Before leaving, Jesus gave them specific instructions:

"Wait for the gift my Father promised." (Acts 1:4)

"In a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." (vs. 5)

"You will receive power." (vs. 8)

"You will be my witnesses."

The revival that Jesus began would, through the disciples, spread in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth. But it would be the gift of the Holy Spirit that would make it possible. And that meant He had to leave.

As Jesus was taken up from them, his disciples "were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 'Men of Galilee,' they said, 'why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, . . . will come back. . .'" (Acts 1:10,11)

In other words, "What are you standing around for?" The mission couldn't continue as long as the disciples stood staring into space. One phase must give way to another phase so that "greater things" could be accomplished. And the same is true for us. We've got work to do and gazing at the past won't get it done.

The Saturn V was a multistage expendable rocket used by NASA's Apollo and Skylab programs from 1967 until 1973. Standing more than 363 feet high and 33 feet in diameter, it remains the largest and most powerful launch vehicle ever brought to operational status.

Each stage of the rocket had a purpose, but the goal of the moon couldn't be reached without letting them go after they served that purpose. The goal was not to land the Saturn V rocket on the moon. The goal was to land *men* safely on the moon.

As critical as it was, Jesus knew that His earthly ministry phase must give way to His heavenly ministry phase. "Christmas" was over. It was time for the next phase--Pentecost. The coming of the Messiah in humility must now give way to the coming of the Spirit in power. Each stage was necessary in achieving the goal of landing men and women safely in the Kingdom of Heaven.

And what stage are we at today? I pray we are one stage closer to the return of our Lord.

2008 is history, and 2009 is still a mystery. But one thing we know, "this same Jesus" who was with us in 2008 will be with us in 2009. *This same Jesus* who walked you through the death of a loved one, or cancer surgery, or through a job loss, a custody battle, a car accident, or a crisis of faith—*this same Jesus* will come back in 2009 to be with you in whatever challenges lie ahead.

And in 2009, we need the same things the disciples needed 2,000 years ago. We need the gift the Father promised. We need to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Because we need power to be Christ's witnesses. The goal is not good church or explosive spiritual experiences. The goal is to be like Christ and His goal is to seek and to save that which is lost.

I need power to be a better witness for Christ next year. Some of you are going to need His power to help you forgive someone who had wronged you. Some of you are going to need His power to heal your marriage, and to be the husband or wife you promised to be. Some of you are going to need His power to help you break the chains of addiction; to help you trust God and His people again; to help you stop living a double life—where you are one person in church and another person at home. Some of you are going to need His power to help you simply believe that He exists and is there for you. And a whole lot of us are going to need His power to help break us free from our Laodicean trance.

Is there something you're holding on to that needs to be jettisoned so that you can ascend higher with Jesus next year? Let it go. This same Jesus who has brought you safe thus far, will, if you trust Him, take you safely on.

Happy New Year.

p.s. Join us Wednesday night, New Year's Eve, at **6:30 PM** [note the time change] for a special "Watch night" prayer meeting to welcome in the new year. For one hour only we want to pray for each other, our community, and our upcoming Community Conversations Live meetings beginning this Sabbath. "Could you not watch with me one hour?" (Matt. 26:40) C'mon, you'll be blessed.

Randy M.