

My Thoughts For Sunday, 26 April 2015

“How Long, Lord?”

They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"

Revelation 6:10

Several years ago in a small village in southern Brazil the family of Juan Rodriguez was summoned to the coroner's office to identify a body. The man lying there was presumably Juan. He had been in an accident so terrible that physical recognition was impossible. Only by the clothing was any identification possible. He was wearing clothing recognizable to the family, and as he could not be located, he was assumed to be the body in question. According to custom, the funeral was set for the next day. As the family and friends were gathered at the burial site a very unusual thing happened. Yes, you guessed it, Juan showed up at his own funeral.

The family was dumbfounded and extremely overjoyed; Juan was alive and well. He had read of his pending funeral and rushed home to clear up the error. It seems he had been sent to a neighboring village for work the preceding day and did not make it home that night. Celebration was in order at the Rodriguez' residence.

A few short weeks ago we celebrated in recognition of the arrival of another man who “showed up” after he was assumed, and even witnessed dead and buried. Three days before that memorable Sunday we celebrate as Easter, Jesus had been crucified and was declared dead by all authorities and was placed in a new tomb awaiting this very Sunday morning when He could be properly prepared for burial. *“Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.”* (John 19:40-42) When the ladies arrived for preparation of the body with their oils and spices, they found the tomb open and the body of their Lord gone. This was not a time for celebration. A man in white, an angel of the Lord, told them that He was not there, He had risen. Risen! Yes, He had risen, resurrected just as He had said He would be. *“The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come; see the place where He was lying. Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”* (Matthew 28:5-7) The authorities manufactured stories that His friends had stolen and hid the body but again when they returned to tell His followers what they had found, another unusual thing happened. He came to them on the road and spoke with them. *“And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him.”* (Matthew 28:8-9)

It brings to mind another time when Jesus “showed up” and appeared to His followers in a most unusual way at a most unexpected time. The apostles were crossing the sea in a boat when they saw what appeared to be an apparition. Coming across the water to meet them, on the

surface, was their Lord. Shocking? You bet it was. They were sure they were seeing a ghost. *"Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*(Matthew 14:23-27)

Let's take another leap back in time to review prophesy from Isaiah regarding God's perfect timing and problem solving. Recorded for us in Isaiah 9:6, we are told of the very first time Jesus "showed up" for us when we least expected Him. *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."*

Juan was there for his family by an error in identification and being in the right place at the right time, but our Lord Jesus has always been there for us when we don't deserve Him and least expect Him by the design of His father through His love and mercy for us although we could never be worthy of this blessing. And yet, it doesn't end here. Look at the promise He gives us one more time that He is coming again for all those who believe in Him. What kind of love could ever cause a perfect God to send His perfect Son to die for us and give us His Holy Spirit to guide and direct us, an ungodly race of people, that He might still give us all that which we can never earn or be worthy of, left to our own devices?

Look at this warning at Matthew 24:44 *"So you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."* We are told here only that He is coming again, but not the reason. We need to look farther to find out what great promise is given when He does return. *"Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to what he has done. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city."*

So, once again, Jesus is going to "show up". Only this time He is promising to fulfill that age old question; , *"How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"* We still do not know exactly when He is going to "show up" this final time, but rest assured , it is going to be a most joyous occasion for those who are prepared to receive Him, a sure cause to celebrate when He finally takes us home to be with Him. *"For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord."* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)