

Articles and Sermons :: REVIVAL by Richard E. Bieber

REVIVAL by Richard E. Bieber - posted by followthelamb (), on: 2018/10/5 22:15

"Suppose one Sunday you arrive at your church a few minutes before the service begins and discover that you can't get into the building for the crowd ... people are crowding around every door. You jump up to get a look inside. The aisles are packed. People are standing along the windows and against the walls.

A woman crowded in behind you begins to weep and cry out to the Lord for mercy. Soon the doorway is alive with prayers and praise and worship and thanksgiving to God. When it's over, you go home and decide to begin that home fellowship on Tuesday evenings you've been thinking about for five years.

The first night seven people...the next week thirty... the next week wall-to-wall people. Your phone starts ringing at odd hours with old friends who want to find the Lord.

Some of the brothers and sisters are led to open a soup kitchen for the unemployed. Almost without effort all the help and all the food they need keep pouring in as believers all over the city start working together.

We could go on describing this strange outpouring of life, which at the moment may sound like a dream, but could be closer than we think. Such things have been called revival ... life coming down from above, which for a season will stir a city, a neighborhood, an assembly of believers.

An awakening of this kind is entirely the work of God. It cannot be set up or engineered by man. And yet, when the Lord decides to send such a revival, it will visit only where there are some people who are willing to respond to his call.

"After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias; and he revealed himself in this way. Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathaneal of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat; but that night they caught nothing. Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any fish?" They answered him, "No." He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, for the quantity of fish. That disciple, whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his clothes, for he was stripped for work, and sprang into the sea. But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but, about a hundred yards off." John 21:1-8

This was a sign of an outpouring of life from God which was to visit Israel through these same men about a month later. Now it was fish coming up in a net ... then it would be people.

This sign, which preceded the revival, was also a call to these men to quit fooling around with their old life and get themselves ready for the work to which they'd been called by Jesus. They had spent three-and-a-half years travelling around with Jesus learning, growing. Then came the trauma of his death. Then the glory of Jesus' appearance to them alive from the dead.

But these forty days during which Jesus kept appearing to them ... teaching, disappearing ...teaching, disappearing were different from the way things were before. Before, they were with Jesus all the time....

- If you had a question you could turn and ask him.
- You knew he was there ... you knew he was in charge.

But this arrangement where he only appeared at certain unpredictable times was hard to adjust to. Now, instead of Jesus organizing things they had to organize for themselves...and it was easy to become lax. There was the temptation to dabble in the life they knew before they followed Jesus.

"I'm going fishing," said Peter.

"We will go with you," said the others.

They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing. And in their hearts every one of these men knew that they were wasting their time.

Is this the best you can do when the Master begins to put some responsibility into your hands?

"Oh, but wait a minute. We haven't turned our backs on the kingdom! We still love Jesus! Aren't we entitled to a little relaxation?"

Sure, nothing wrong with a change of pace, a rest. But that's not what you're doing. You're dividing your hearts. You're into something which is competing with the Kingdom of God for your hearts. You're moving away from the voice of the Shepherd.

Because they were not listening to the voice of the Master, they were now drifting back to their old life.

Suddenly the Master comes to them in the middle of their stagnation and calls,

"Have you caught anything?"

"Nothing!"

"Drop the net on the right side of the boat and you'll get something."

The net full of fish was a sign of what lay ahead, a call to wake up.

There was a revival coming to Israel — an awesome harvest of human souls for the Kingdom of God. It would come through these very men if they would cooperate with their hands and their hearts. With their hands, but also with their hearts.

"Cast the net on the right side of the boat,"

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

John 21:15-17

.....The same Lord who dealt so graciously with his disciples is now dealing with us in the same two ways.

First, Jesus is showing us, as he showed them, that there is a revival waiting just a short distance down the road. Today he gives us a sign by saying to us,

"Cast the net on the right side of the boat and you'll find something."

In other words,

just reach out to some people today ... this week. Invite them to the banquet of God. Offer them the mercy of God. Point them to Calvary---and you will find some results, you will see a response,

- you will!"

But this response, which you will see if you lower your net, is only a sign...a small fraction of the response that will soon come to those whose hearts are ready to work in the real harvest.

Second, for the heart to be ready to work in the harvest it has to be single.

"Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these fish?
....do you love me more than this old life you keep flirting with?"

"Feed my sheep."

So he says to us,

"If you love me more than these fish, then leave the fish and start feeding my sheep. Start nourishing the people who are already coming to you for bread. Soon you will have so many people coming to you for bread your life will be consumed in feeding them.

Keep feeding them as I feed them, and feeding them will be your life, and I will lead you all the way...perhaps even to a death like mine."

The Lord is asking for two things from us:

One: Cast the net on the right side of the boat and discover the Kingdom of God afresh --- go out and do a little feeding this week.

Two: Settle in your heart. "Do you love me more than these (distractions)? If you do, start feeding my sheep."

Down the road a short distance the Body of Christ on earth, including the Body of Christ in your town, is going to experience a revival which will make revivals of the past look pale.

- There will be a harvest initiated by God himself.

- There will be laborers raised up by the Lord of the harvest.

Will we be part of this? More accurately, are we part of it now? The question which decides whether or not we are involved in this harvest is put to us by the Lord himself,

"Do you love me more than these fish?

Do you love me more than the distractions which clutter your life?

Do you love me above all things?"

May the Spirit help us as we give him an answer today, and in the days ahead.

Lord Jesus, I confess that I have been so busy fishing in my own pond, that your call on my life has faded from my heart. I repent at the foot of your cross. Give me eyes to recognize the sheep you send me, and a heart to feed them with the Bread of Heaven."