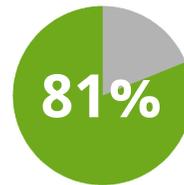


JOURNALS POSTED ON APRIL 17, 2017

An Easter Assault



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SUPPORT PLEDGED



DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Easter Sunday in Kikongo was loud...more than normal loud. Whistles blew and horns blasted, people yelled out cheers, children went up and down the isles of the church and crowded the windows and doorways. Katrina and I watched from outside because we literally wouldn't fit in the building by the time we arrived! Two people were trying to keep a semblance of order by shooshing others and telling them to sit down, but this was a losing battle for them. It was assaulting to our western ways of proper meetings. But maybe Easter Sunday needs to look more like revelry and less like a lecture. Maybe we need more dancing and whistles and terribly loud music. Church today in this small village was a celebration, a party, I mean what better way to shout that Jesus is alive.

The story of the resurrection is a lot like today with its own assault of 1st century culture. To begin with it was the Messiah who died rather than doing the killing. A criminal was the first to arrive in "paradise", not a parishioner. And it was women who first preached the gospel of a risen LORD, not men.

Every part of this story is counter-cultural and backwards. Men were supposed to be the heroes, the righteous go to heaven and the Messiah was supposed to do some murdering of Israel's Roman occupants.

In a culture where power is worshiped and weakness was equated with evil, a God who chooses to die so that his enemies may live makes no sense. Even today in the U.S. one can see that power is sought after more so than self-sacrifice. For evidence of this think about why the World's largest military is boasting of getting larger while it simultaneously brags of cutting support to its poorest denizens all the while to the cheers of so many in the Church. If there is one thing the current political system shows the rest of the world, it is that we are more worried about being on the side of power than on side of meekness, gentleness and humility. Again, I have to chalk this one up to God's way not making sense to many people both in the Church and those outside.

And in a culture where women were marginalized, God chose to first reveal his resurrected self to them ordaining them as the first preachers of the Gospel. I find this to be a bigger deal than we make of it. It was women who chose to go to the grave where Roman guards were supposed to be on post while the men remained hidden away. Our life in Congo has brought new light to this passage and made it clear that I too would have been hiding with all the other men.

Congo has taught me a lot about avoiding soldiers, police, and government officials. Really anybody with power of any kind often means trouble for us in one way or another. I often plan travel and errands around the ability to avoid these people. I ran in to a local police chief early on in a nearby village. He smelled of alcohol and demanded that I come to the "station" for questioning. Fortunately, my friend told him that that wasn't going to happen and if he needed to talk with me, he must first talk with that village pastor. This is the proper protocol for such request. We then just drove off leaving him behind. I try to avoid these confrontations like the plague, so had I been there when the women decided to take perfume to the the tomb, all the while knowing Roman guards were standing watch, there is no way I would have to the courage to go to Jesus' tomb just to make a dead corps smell better. But those women did. They were strong and courageous when no man was. The men were hiding and had just denied even knowing Jesus, but the women stood with the crowd and wept openly while the crowd and guards mocked Jesus.

So today be like the women, be like the Congolese, Live courageously in the face of the principalities of this dark world. Don't be scared to look improper as you celebrate the Risen

Lord. Let him assault your preconceived notions of what is proper in hopes of learning what is true.