We Are Trailblazers

May 22, 2016

Romans 12:1

“*Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God,--this is your spiritual act of worship*.”

2 Chronicles 7:14 …*if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land*.

God, make clear the role I play today in awakening the Christ in the minds and hearts of the people I encounter.

When I was a child, and even today I enjoy reading biographies of people who have made a difference: people like Amelia Earhart, Davy Crockett, George Rogers Clark, Jedediah Smith, Jim Bowie, Kit Carson, Meriwether Lewis, and Daniel Boone. People like: Galileo, Richard Feynman, Albert Einstein, Thomas Edison, Nikola Tesla, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Marie Curie, Louis Pasteur, Ben Franklin, Leonardo Da Vinci, Alexander Graham Bell, George Washington Carver, Florence Nightingale, Sigmund Freud, Stanford Fleming, the Wright Brothers, Jane Goodall,; Harvey Milk, Wangari Maatha, who was the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace prize, 'for her contribution to sustainable development, democracy and peace'; Salman Khan, founder of Khan Academy, the online non-profit educational platform whose mission is to provide a world-class education for anyone, anywhere.…

These people, and thousands of others like them have made a difference and continue to make a difference; they are influential, innovators, pioneers. They fashioned a path that others might follow and expand upon their efforts.

The Bible has its own list of trailblazers: Adam and Eve, Noah and Emzara, Abraham and Sarah, Moses and Zipporah, Elijah, John the Baptist, and of course, Christ.

Acts 3:15 states, “You killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses.” The word ‘Prince’ is translated from the Greek word *archegos*, which can be translated as captain, author, originator, founder, scout, pioneer, or trailblazer. The word indicates one who leads into battle, blazes a trail, or sets a pattern; one who initiates and guides.

These trailblazers, or forerunners, as the Bible has described them, are people who dared to follow their hearts, to do what needed to be done no matter what. They had a different spirit: they followed the Spirit of God, not the spirit of the world.

A trailblazer belongs to a community of dreamers. They live by the words of Christ when he said: “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible. (Matthew 19:26.) Despite their context in history or culture they demonstrate several attributes that are native to all of us. I will mention just six today: Curiosity, Imagination, Joy, Enthusiasm, Faith, and Courage.

We are Divinely **curious**, and we continue to expand and grow and gain in understanding because of our curiosity. Because we are curious we seek and find the truth; we seek and find an understanding of the Divine Source and establish a relationship with our God. We question what we are doing and why. One of our guiding principles is: "*Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you*."

Another attribute we all share with these trailblazers is that of **imagination**. We can imagine good, and we can imagine ways of drawing that good to us. The men and women we hold great used their imaginations to bring innovation to the world. The same Source of imagination pervades our minds. Doors are opened and new ideas and discoveries flood our hearts and minds as we allow the Christ to move through us. What we often think are just dreams or frivolous fancy are often the seeds of a Divine inspiration.

We are told in 1 Corinthians 2:12: "*Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God*."

The third quality we all share with pioneers is **Joy**. We may experience it in nature or through discovery, or through service – it can bubble forth from unlimited sources. Just imagine the joy the pioneers in outer space experienced when they looked down and saw planet Earth: joy in viewing the world with no boundaries and as the home of God's universal family.

There is joy in spiritual discovery. When we acknowledge each other as a spiritual being, we are beholding the image of God. This experience brings joy to our hearts and into our lives.

An awareness of God is a joy that is full of glory. Being aware of God is being in the presence of God. I cannot imagine what greater joy there could be. "*My lips will shout for joy when I sing praises to you*." --Psalm 71:23

The fourth quality is that of **enthusiasm**. Enthusiasm is the resulting focus inspired by the joy we feel. Every day our heart's capacity expands to experience and to express more of God's goodness. When we are attuned to the Christ, we naturally greet each new morning with joyous expectation. Like as a child on our birthday, we are eager to discover what the day's special blessings will be. And, like as a child, we delight in sharing these blessings with others.

Enthusiasm can be defined as “the spirit of God within”. When we feel enthusiastic, nothing about life is limited or stale. We are not bored, because we are one with the infinite possibilities of Spirit. We are original; imaginative, and alert to the guidance of God. There is no limit to what we can do and what we can be.

**Faith** is another attribute that we all have available to us. There is an assurance and a strength in faith. Faith makes its presence felt in the serenity of spirit. Faith fills our hearts, uplifts our spirit, and invites Gods goodness into our life.

Faith is not reserved to particular persons; all can be faith-filled. We proclaim our faith simply by living as though we have faith. We proclaim our faith by trusting in God, by trusting in His love, by trusting in the goodness of His creation and the goodness of His people. In this steadfast trust, we are faith-filled, we are strong.

Jesus made a clear path for us to follow. He stood firm when standing still would heal, help, and inspire. He pressed on through challenge and change when pressing on meant growth and blessing. As we think about Jesus and His faith, it is as though He is whispering to us now: "Come, follow me. What I have done you can do. Your faith will be as my faith, a light to those who come after. We do not live just for this moment, just for this day. We are a part of eternity, a part of the Father's endless life. Follow me. Have faith!"

Hebrews 12:1- 2: *Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfector of our faith*.

The final attribute I will mention today is that of **courage**. When we observe someone whose courage does not waiver in the face of danger or obstacles, our admiration flows to them. Yet courage is not merely the absence of fear, it is moving past our fear and doing what needs to be done despite our concerns, dread and misgivings.

Through courage we listen respectfully to the sage advice of others but dare to follow our own path. With God’s courage we face our greatest fears and faith-filled press through every obstacle. Courage supports our tenacity and perseverance.

We are told in 2 Timothy 1:7 -- *For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline*.

Then again in Joshua 1:9 -- *Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go*.”

So if we share these qualities with the powerful servants of God – curiosity, imagination, joy, enthusiasm, faith, and courage – are we not also wired to be powerful servants of God?

Jesus was our *archegos*, our way-shower. The power of God moving through him as the Christ has become our beacon for life, our pole star. And now it is our turn to continue to do our part. We are called to be trailblazers. No, we may not be innovators or, inventors, but we are influencers. Through our very being and living – how we act or react, what we say and how we treat others - we have an impact on people. We may not even realize the influence we have on someone, but new paths are being formed.

Jesse Jackson shared the fact that his running for President in 1984 and 1988 made an impact on people. A man came up to him during his presidential run in 1988 and said that he was with Jackson in Selma, as part of the Klan. But after hearing him speak his principles over the last 8 years here he was again, this time ‘with him’ not just in location but in spirit and thinking.

[Jimmy Dean Sausage sandwich commercial]

When we dare to share our hearts with others, whether in words or actions, whether on a large stage or one-on-one, we create an effect; we matter. Be sure of it - we are being watched. When our actions, thoughts, and words align with Spirit there is a power present that is beyond anything we control. When we allow the Christ to move through us, act through us, speak through us, and serve through us, we become merely a vessel; all the power belongs to the Christ. It really is not us influencing anyone; it is the Father within who does His works.

We are called to set off toward the impossible dreams and let God do His thing as we follow the Light that draws us ever onward. When we can break free from the chains of worldly influence and open our arms to the power of the Christ waiting for us to get out of the way so that new paths can be forged, new avenues opened, and more hearts touched through us, they will call us a trailblazer.

My prayer is that we will open our lives, our eyes, our hearts, our minds, and our ears to hear the Christ whisper to our souls: “Come follow me, you old trailblazer, you.”

Let us pray….