



MINUTES WITH MESSIAH

Volume 10, Issue 9

Web Site: <http://www.minuteswithmessiah.com>

July 2009

FACEBOOK FAMILY

I am a Facebook junkie. I have to check my Facebook account every day, and preferably at least twice a day. I want to know what all my friends, most of whom I haven't seen in years, are doing. For those of you who do not use computers or are otherwise unfamiliar with it, Facebook is what is called a "social networking site." Of such sites, Facebook is the most often visited, surpassing MySpace earlier this year. Originally designed so that college students could keep up with others at their school, it has now expanded to include anyone (and just about everyone). I have my friends (and one has to approve who is a friend or not) divided into groups like church, theatre, my high school, my college. I have even established a Minutes With Messiah fan page on Facebook. (Come join us. On Facebook just search for Minutes With Messiah and become a fan.) People knew immediately that I did not make it to our church's family camp to present this lesson because I updated my status on Facebook to say that I had gotten lost. Others update with all sorts of information or quizzes. Facebook is a family of friends keeping each other aware of what is going on in their lives, no matter how trivial.

It occurs to me that the modern church has gotten away from that family feeling. When the church began it was almost essential to treat each other like family, because nobody else believed the same things the early Christians did. Because of a shared faith, the church stuck together like Facebook friends.

And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

I have a friend on Facebook who used to attend the assembly where I worship. She no longer does so, but it was months after she started going somewhere else before I was aware she was gone. That is my fault, but I am not alone. Perhaps because we have lost a sense of family in the world, many people don't realize when others come and go in our churches. Imagine if someone one day woke up, as in a Franz Kafka story, and was missing his nose. One day it was there, and now it is gone, and there was no sense of loss as it was going. This is not just in the megachurches, either. Mine is a relatively small congregation of less than 300. We are losing brothers and sisters, and don't even notice.

This loss of a sense of family has other effects. People no longer feel the need to assemble with others. If there is no need for togetherness, why gather? We hear people say they can worship as well at home or in front of a television assembly. That is because they have never felt part of a family when they did assemble with others. But that feeling of family is one of the purposes of the assembly (Heb 10:24-25).

This affects church discipline as well. If we only see a person once (or maybe three times) a week and never eat with them, how will we change their actions by refusing to eat with them? (1 Cor 5:11) When they have no loyalty to one congregation, and a menu of other congregational choices, why should they stay with a group that wants to make them change? They can find a group that doesn't care what they do, or shares in their sin.

Today's church needs to get back to the old feeling of being a unique family. Until we do we will continue to lose people to the world. It has to start again, and it has to start with me.

CONTENTS

Facebook Family	1
A Road Trip	2
Fishers of Men	4

All articles Copyright 2009 by Tim O'Hearn unless otherwise noted

A ROAD TRIP

I had business in Emmaus. Since I was in Jerusalem, and did not look forward to a ten-kilometer walk alone, I asked Cleopas if he could go with me. He agreed, and so we left in the morning. I would have liked to stay in Jerusalem that day, but my business was just too pressing. I figured when I got back I would hear more about this news that the Teacher's body was not in his tomb.

Naturally, that morning's events were the topic of our conversation. Maybe because of the similarity in their names, Cleopas knew Clopas well, and it was Clopas' wife, among others who first discovered that the body was missing. So I figured Cleopas would have some inside information. After all, who could believe this rumor about the Teacher being alive? We were sure he was to be the one to lead us against the Romans. And yet he seemed willing to let those same Romans put him to death on a stake. We were disappointed, and even a bit perplexed as we discussed this on the road.

Some time after we left Jerusalem we were joined on the road by a stranger. Now, it is not always safe to talk to strangers on the roads near Jerusalem. People have been beaten and robbed on these roads (which was another

It was more than what he did. His words were as mighty as his deeds. You should have heard him.

reason I had asked Cleopas to come along—for safety, not so that he could be beaten). This stranger looked safe, though. And since we were leaving Jerusalem we were less likely to be carrying anything of value. Besides which, there were still groups of people traveling that road, leaving the city after the holiday. So we felt secure enough to talk to this man. But his first question surprised us.

“You seem sad as you are walking along here. What is this that you are discussing? It sounds strange.”

Cleopas answered, “Where have you been? You must be the only stranger in Jerusalem who has not heard about all of this. It was all the talk during the Feast.”

Maybe we were blowing it up a little. Surely there were some people in Jerusalem that had not heard about the Teacher. Some of them may not have been present for the trial, or even the execution. The

earthquake and the darkness you couldn't miss, but if you weren't at the court or the place of execution, maybe you would not have heard about it. The fact that we were among the Teacher's followers may have clouded our view, but it seemed amazing that someone might not be familiar with the events of the weekend. To us they seemed to be the turning point of the whole of history. And here was a man who seemed oblivious to it all.

When the stranger asked what these things were that happened, Cleopas jumped in and explained it all. One would think that he was preaching the first sermon about the risen Teacher. Perhaps he was.

“We are followers of the Teacher from Nazareth. He was a famous rabbi. Well known throughout Judea. Have you not heard of him? He was possibly the most popular rabbi in the whole country. From Jerusalem to Galilee, and even beyond, he performed many wonderful works. The blind regained their sight. The lame walked. He even touched lepers and made them clean. Yes, I said he touched them. Instead of becoming unclean himself, he made them clean. Not only that, but we have even seen him raise the dead.

“You don't believe me? Not just Jewish dead. He even helped the Romans if they asked him. And a few weeks ago he raised a man that was dead for four days. Have you been out of the country, that you have not heard of Lazarus? He lived just a few miles south of here, and got sick and died. But the Teacher came, and called him out of the grave. Wrappings and all, he came out. You should have been there! What a commotion!

“That was enough to make the men on the Council worried. I hear that they are even looking for Lazarus to kill him again. Imagine that. Killing a man a second time.

“But it was more than what he did. His words were as mighty as his deeds. You should have heard him. People used to stand around all day, listening. He could speak. But it wasn't just the way he said things. It was what he said. He talked about a kingdom. He talked about freedom. He talked about doing good to others, even the Romans. He talked like the Pharisees, but without their conceit. (You aren't a Pharisee, are you? I hope I haven't offended.) More than that, he talked like everything we pictured in the Messiah. Why, our friend Simon, the Zealot, he was ready to follow the Teacher into the teeth of a Roman legion if he had asked it.

“But the Council got jealous. I think I already said that. Far be it from me to talk bad about the *Cohen Gadol*, the High Priest. But when I think of what he did just a few days ago, it is hard not to talk evil about him. The priests and the Council came by night and took the Teacher. One

of our number was friends with some of the High Priest's family, and got to go see the trial, if you can call it that. They couldn't even find two witnesses to agree, but finally accused him of heresy and took him to the Roman governor. I understand that there they changed the charge to sedition. After all, what do the Romans care about heresy? Whatever the charge, they saw to it that the Romans 'question' the teacher, in their own inimitable way, and then execute him on one of those stakes you see everywhere around here these days. We were there. We saw him suffer. We saw him die. This was the one in whom we had put all our hope. This was surely the Messiah, we thought. But he was executed as a common criminal, who had done nothing wrong. Can you wonder that we are so sad as we walk along? My companion here, he was even closer to the Teacher than I was. It has not been a good weekend for him.

"And yet. Here it is, three days later, and the wife of one of my friends and some of the other women went to the tomb this morning. You see, we had not even had time for a proper burial, and they wanted to anoint the body with spices before it started to stink too much. But they say that he was not in the tomb. They talk about seeing angels who told them that he had risen from the dead! Imagine. Now my friend's wife is not a fanciful woman. Some might even say she does not have an original thought in her head. (She is a good woman, though.) If she talks about angels, then there must have been something to cause her to say that. So when they came back and told us about all this, Simon here, and John—maybe I shouldn't be giving names—went to the tomb. Sure enough, the stone had been rolled back and the Teacher was not there. They even say he arose from the dead. Now we don't know what to believe. He could raise others from the dead, but who could raise himself?"

I know this stranger had to be a Jew. Why? Because after listening to Cleopas' lengthy speech he responded with one just as long. They say that during one Passover Rabbi Hillel, of blessed memory, and others discussed minor points of the story of the Exodus so long that somebody had to remind them to eat the meal because it was almost daybreak, and it would not do to leave any of the food past sunup. In the same way, this man lectured us.

"Fools," he said. "Have you not listened in the synagogues? Have you not learned that this is exactly what the prophets said about the Messiah? Don't you know the Messiah had to suffer these things, in order to be glorified?"

He then spent several kilometers pointing out things from the prophets and Moses. I guess we had heard these things before. In fact, I remembered some of this was what the Teacher had told us during the past three or four years. But I was taught by Pharisees of the strictest

order, and they explained all of this away, one way or another. Simon, the one Cleopas had called the Zealot, surely would have argued with this guy. This "suffering servant" stuff was not what we were familiar with. But he made some pretty good points.

It seemed no time before we were entering Emmaus. Since it was evening we invited the stranger to stay with us. He seemed to want to go onward, but it was getting dark. So he agreed to eat with us, anyway. I could not conduct my business until the next day, so we went to a house I often stayed at and ate. The stranger insisted on saying the blessing over the bread and the fruit of the vine. As he did so, it was as if my eyes had been blinded but now I could see. Not four nights ago I had seen this same man say these same blessings at another meal. This was indeed the Teacher. John had not seen him, nor had I at the tomb, but I was seeing him now. He was indeed alive. Very alive. How had I not seen it as he explained our blindness to us on the road?

No sooner had I recognized the Teacher, but he disappeared. He had accomplished what he wanted, and he just vanished. Cleopas and I were amazed. Hadn't we

This was surely the
Messiah, we thought. But
he was executed as a
common criminal, who
had done nothing wrong.

listened on the road, just as we had listened for years as we walked along the roads between here and Galilee? Did our hearts not burn within us? This was news indeed. We had to tell the others.

It had taken much of the day to walk the ten kilometers to Emmaus. Even though it was now dark, it took us a lot less time to make it back to Jerusalem. Granted, the moon was only just past the full, but that only helped a little. We were spurred on by the news we had to tell.

When we got back to Jerusalem we found the other disciples. We told them what we had seen and heard. We were hardly through the door when Cleopas shouted, "The Teacher has appeared to Peter and me." We had to tell our story. When I told about recognizing the Teacher when he broke the bread, they were all amazed. In fact, I had to repeat that part of the story several times that night.

I was not in Emmaus to complete my business that next morning. You know what? I really did not care.

(Based on Luke 24:13-35)

FISHERS OF MEN

Music and Lyrics: Tim O'Hearn

1. The Mas - ter walked a - long the shore And saw some men a - float. He begged them fol - low
2. They left their nets and fol - lowed him To bring a catch of men. They cast the gos - pel
3. And so we fish for men to - day. The gos - pel is our net. We cast it out and

in his steps And leave their nets in the boat. Come fol - low me and ye shall be Fish - ers of men,
of the Lord And man - y came - there - in.
know not how, But man - y souls - we get.

fish - ers of men. No nets will you use but words of God To bring them in, to bring them in.

The musical score is written in 8/8 time. It features a treble and bass clef staff. The melody is primarily in the treble clef, with a bass line in the bass clef. The lyrics are placed below the notes. The score is divided into three systems, each with a treble and bass staff. The first system contains the first three lines of lyrics. The second system contains the next three lines. The third system contains the final line of lyrics. The music ends with a double bar line.

Timothy J. O'Hearn
737 Monell Dr NE
Albuquerque NM 87123