

“MESSIAH”

A Communion Meditation

The headline story for the Grand Rapids Press on October 20, 2009 decried the shortage of H1N1 flu vaccine in West Michigan. We all remember this scare that happily never materialized into the national killer that was feared. But there was another story that didn't even appear in the paper at all that day that would have certainly been a more worthy headline looking back in hindsight. This story remained untold partially because it happened half-way across the world, in Pakistan.

This story would have involved a Pakistani Christian by the name of Pervaiz Masih (Ma see). As a Christian, Masih is in the minority in Pakistan. Only 2% of the citizens living in Pakistan today would claim the name of Christ. Pakistan is overwhelmingly Moslem. About 95% Pakistanis follow the Islamic faith. As is true in every country that has a vast majority of Moslems, Christians suffer a measure of persecution in Pakistan. This persecution takes on a variety of forms. It can involve imprisonment sometimes for seemingly minor issues that are used for an excuse. The persecution can take a physical form – beatings of Christians are not uncommon. Quite often, as in Masih's case, the persecution involves social repression. Christians are generally the garbage collectors and sewage workers in Pakistan. Sometimes these are the only jobs that are available to them. Masih's job was sweeping the halls in the Islamabad International Islamic University for menial wages. He was intelligent enough to be a professor at the school, but this was the only job that he could find.

October 20 started out just about like every other fall day for Masih. He was working his way down the hall, making sure that he collected every bit of dust because he knew that his work would be scrutinized, when he lifted his eyes and saw something that didn't seem right. There was a man walking down the hall towards him. The fact that he was a man was Masih's first indication that something just wasn't right. You see, schooling is segregated in Pakistan. Masih was employed in an all female school. There shouldn't have been a man walking down the hall. But as the man came closer, Masih's initial suspicions were confirmed. Masih could clearly see that the man was wearing a bomb as a vest. Masih's keen mind immediately processed this information. This suicide bomber was headed for the cafeteria where 400 female students were gathered, eating their lunch.

Masih could have dropped his broom and run out one of the side doors into the street to escape the apparent tragedy that was looming. After all, this bomber wasn't after him. He didn't strap this bomb around his body to attack the school janitor. No, this bomber was obviously planning to kill several hundred female

students. He had waited until this moment when the women would be gathered together in the cafeteria so he could take the greatest toll of human life. Masih could have easily escaped saving himself.

But Masih didn't turn and run out the side door. No, he ran instead right toward that suicide bomber. As Masih was lunging towards him, the bomber realized that he had been identified and he detonated his bomb. The 400 Islamic women students who were eating in the cafeteria heard the deafening sound of the blast and even felt some shaking of the tables, but none of them was touched by any of the shrapnel of the bomb as it was all contained down the hall, a hundred feet from the cafeteria.

There were 2 martyrs that were killed that day on October 20, 2009. One was an evil, wicked religious zealot who had designed a plan to kill as many innocent victims as possible to gain a name for himself and acquire rewards from the false god he believed in. The other was a good man who was willing to sacrifice his own life even for those who would acknowledge themselves to be his enemies, those who had thwarted his dreams and career. Interestingly, Masih in the Urdu language of Pakistan means "Messiah". Pervaiz Masih had certainly lived up to his name and had become a Messiah for those 400 students at the Islamic University. When interviewed by CNN later that day, Professor Fateh Muhammad Malik, a rector of the University freely admitted, "Pervaiz Masih rose above the barriers of caste, creed and sectarian terrorism. Despite being a Christian, he sacrificed his life to save the Muslim girls."

Pervaiz Masih in his sacrificial death was following the example of his namesake who had come before him 2,000 years ago.

*Jesus Christ as God's Messiah chose to come to this earth to save those who were his enemies. He didn't have to. He certainly could have chosen to save himself. On the very night of his betrayal he admitted, "I could call legions of angels to come and deliver me right now if I so chose". But Jesus Christ didn't choose the path of escape. No, even though he was rejected and hated by his enemies to the point where they chose to put him to death, he chose to die for his enemies so that they might have life.

*So the Lord Jesus Christ chose the path to the cross. He subjected himself to the pain and suffering because he knew that through his stripes we would be healed. He knew that through his death, we could have life. God's enemy, the father of all terrorists, had set his course on the destruction of all mankind. His hatred was so great against those created in the image and likeness of Almighty God that he committed himself to their total destruction. But our Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, intercepted him. He stood in our place. He intercepted the arch terrorist. Because he died, we have the opportunity to live.

*We come this morning to remember and celebrate that sacrifice that the Lord Jesus Christ made for us.

*The Apostle Paul wrote, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Cor. 5:21)

*John the beloved Apostle wrote, "He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:11-14)

*If you have put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ this morning, then you need not fear the terrorist. You need not fear the terrorist because your Messiah has already intercepted him. Your Messiah has taken the fury of the terrorist's wrath. Your Messiah has given his life in your place so that you can be born again as a child of God. Your Messiah has taken your sin upon himself so that you might be given his divine righteousness.

*If you have not yet put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, now is the time to do so. If you don't, you will have to face the terrorist alone.

*If you have put your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and to the best of your knowledge are walking in fellowship with him, we invite you to join us in remembering and celebrating his sacrifice for our sins.