



Good News Sightings

March 3, 2017—Vol. 11, No. 9

Every once in a while, I get a glimpse of the kingdom of God breaking through and it's so refreshing. Despite the flaws and the challenges going on in the church today, God's kingdom is alive and well and the King is still at work through His people.

I talked to a pastor friend this week who shared about his ministry opportunity from the past couple of weeks. It's too long of a story to share here, and it's early in the journey, but such stories give me great hope that we will embrace God's kingdom agenda as we look to the future in the CGGC.

My pastor friend became aware of a young man who was hungry, homeless and struggling because he had just been released from serving time in prison. My pastor friend reached out to the young man and took him to dinner. He made arrangements for a couple of nights of emergency lodging. He followed up with him the next day and took him shopping for groceries. He made arrangements for the young man to be able to attend worship in their local church on Sunday. He invited the young man to their weekly discipleship gathering. During this time, a couple of other folks from the church connected with the young man and eventually led him to the Lord. This community of believers is continuing to come around this young believer and encourage him while helping him get back on his feet again. It won't be a quick and easy road; it's a long road to travel and this journey will require a long-haul effort. This group of believers in living out their faith, demonstrating and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Interestingly enough, this all happened because another pastor friend who was aware of the need, but didn't live in the area, reached out and asked for help on behalf of the young man.



Here's what gives me hope: this isn't just an isolated incident. I'm no longer surprised by stories like this as I travel across the CGGC. It happens fairly consistently that someone will pull me aside and tell me about what's going on in their life and I hear story after story of people who are demonstrating and proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ in powerful yet humble ways. I hear stories of brothers and sisters who are giving in sacrificial ways to care for the needs of the least of these in our society. I hear stories of brothers and sisters who have opened up their lives to those who are often forgotten,

ignored, left behind, or considered too riddled with problems to risk offering a helping hand. I hear story after story of disciples of Jesus who are taking great efforts and risks to live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I'm not naïve; not everyone has arrived at this place of loving and serving their neighbors and the least of these. It's not for the faint of heart. I often encourage churches looking to expand their ministry to look to their community, to talk with their local community leaders, school leaders, police, and social service workers to get an idea of how their local congregation might serve the greater community in Jesus' name. I'll never forget the time a pastor responded to this suggestion: "won't we get the wrong type of people if we ask the police how we can help?" Nothing could be further from the truth! We serve a loving God who came to this earth to rescue and redeem "the wrong type of people." We, brothers and sisters, are "the wrong type of people," and God reached out to us. The kingdom of God exists for "the wrong type of people."

There are narratives in our society that tell us that certain people are beyond reach, beyond redemption or beyond hope. The list is long and varied: felons, sexual offenders, heroin addicts, drunks, perverts, thieves, drug dealers, human traffickers, and pornography peddlers are typically on those lists. Some of my friends would include Democrats on their list, other friends would list Republicans on their list and I would suggest that Ohio State fans might be on the list too. These narratives do not find their origin in the Gospel. These narratives are not our narrative as followers of Jesus Christ. No one is beyond the love, grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. No one is beyond His reach.

This week I got a powerful glimpse of the kingdom of God advancing through the actions of brothers and sisters who refused to listen to the prevailing narrative of our day that ex-cons are a hopeless endeavor. I'm filled with hope every time I get one of these glimpses of the kingdom of God. Pray for our brothers and sisters that they would not grow weary in doing good. Pray for this young brother as he's learning to follow in the ways of Jesus. Pray that all of us might respond in obedience the next time we get the opportunity to demonstrate and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God is near, let's not miss it.

Christ's Peace,

Lance