

November 2009

Harvest Time and Being Neighbors for Life

"But now, for a brief moment, the Lord our God has been gracious in leaving us a remnant and giving us a firm place in his sanctuary, and so our God gives light to our eyes and a little relief in our bondage. Though we are slaves, our God has not deserted us in our bondage. He has shown us kindness in the sight of the kings of Persia: He has granted us new life to rebuild the house of our God and repair its ruins, and he has given us a wall of protection in Judah and Jerusalem. Ezra 9:8-9

This portion of scripture records the prayer of Ezra for "the remnant" of Israelites who were back home in Jerusalem after they had been overthrown by the nation of Persia. God's plan for the Israelites was for them to experience a lifetime marked by increase and benefit, but because of their defiance and neglect of God's Laws, they had become slaves. Israel remained God's chosen people and dearly loved, but now the "land of promise" belonged to the King of Persia and they were subject to Him.

Representatively this portion of scripture defines for us (the New Life family) our role in His Harvest, which means, Jesus' activity of reaching, rebuilding and releasing people from a death-defining life (call this a life of ruins and heading for eternal ruin), unto an everlasting life -a life rebuilt, repaired and released through the grace of God. This is the mission of New Lifers –to be neighbors who give themselves to live a life of love. Israel's task of rebuilding the temple (the dwelling place of God), symbolizes our task of seeing broken people restored. God's new choice for a dwelling place is within the hearts of people who open themselves to Him and we are His chosen instruments to see His dwelling place restored to her original pattern –a Christ-like life. Loving people within our circle of influence is our mission and this is exactly what the man called the Good Samaritan did in his day (Luke 10:25-37.) Like the Good Samaritan, we are called to reach out to those we see throughout our daily lives. If we stop and think about the people that we see in daily travels, the folks at work, in our neighborhood, at the gym, at the place where we regularly buy gas and shop, at the bank, where we get our car serviced, etc – these are the ones that we are to pray that God would open their spiritual eyes to see His love for them, and to ask God to send someone to be "God's living proof" that He is alive and loves them dearly. We are tasked to not only pray, but to be living proof (that Jesus is alive) by living a life of love toward them. The Good Samaritan saw the man who had been robbed and chose to get involved. He got off his donkey, cleaned and bandaged the man's wounds, and gave Him shelter. He took responsibility for seeing that the life of this man was solidly back on the pathway toward the life that God intended.

Being neighbors for life is our mission -followers of Christ who see the people that surround our daily lives as ones dearly loved by God, and who see ourselves as His hands and His voice. God expressed His heart for those yet to know Him: *"How can they believe if they have not heard?"* He urges us to join His rescue efforts: *"Whom shall I send?"* May our response be: *"Here I am Lord, send me."* (Romans 10:14,15; Isaiah 6:8,9)

Join me in taking an inventory of the names of the people that surround our daily lives. Lets write them down and begin in earnest to pray for them and to say to Jesus, "Here I am Lord, send me" that they might know His love for them.

Pastor Dave