

Two murder cases were solved this past week. Two families that have been tormented with who killed their ^{daughters} ~~son~~, their ^{sisters} ~~brother~~, now know. Maybe you saw the article in the Plain Dealer. Clepton Cousin confessed. A prisoner, convicted of other crimes ended his silence about these cases.

As I read the article I wondered, "Why did he confess now?" Yet even as I asked it I answered the question. He became a believer. As I read a few sentences later the reporter wrote that Clepton ^{Cousin} had found God.

Found God.

I used to like to say, It isn't God who was lost. Truly when we come to faith we have been found by that shepherd who has entered the wilderness to bring us home. Yet for Clepton Cousin it must seem that in a world where God never before was, God now is.

How did God suddenly arrive? Through the word and witness of some nameless person. Another prisoner? A social worker? A chaplain? A sister? A brother? A friend? Or maybe not just one, but many building the temple of God in this man's heart brick by brick through the years. Words and deeds the bricks, until now faith has come and Christ lives in that temple.

After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town where he himself intended to go. He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.

Twice during his earthly ministry Jesus sent his followers. First the twelve, then the seventy. He was not content to gather a special group around himself, and leave the rest without God. Lost sheep. ^{700/100} Lambs he found he trained to become shepherds themselves.

He sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town where he himself ^{was to come} was about to come. What a wonderful sentence. Wherever they went, Jesus

himself was about to come. They spoke Jesus word, and people believed. And Jesus was there. In a prison a word was spoken, a man believed and Jesus came there. He sent them to every twon where he himself was about to come.

He told them to say, "The kingdom of God has come near to you." God's being king, God's ruling is near. God's kingdom was near that murderer. Then he believed, and God's kingdom was there. For God ruled there in his heart and in his life.

God's rule is near to you. As near as faith. God's rule is near to every person you encounter though they may not know it. As near as faith.

When you speak to them of God. When you tell the old old story of Jesus and his love, who knows what may happen? Will a burden of guilt and shame be lifted from one who is nearly crushed by them? Will a slave of drinking or abusing or ^{drinking} ~~eating~~ become a slave of Christ? Will peace come to a heart that has known no peace, will hope spring from ground that has only known dispair, will the waters of chaos be pushed aside that solid ground and dry land may appear?

The whole world needs God's kingdom to come. The world needs a new day where God is worshiped, where Christ rules, where serpents and scorpions and death no longer exert their lordship through fear.

Christ sends you.

You in word and deed bring God's kingdom near. As near as faith. For when you believe, Christ who seemed absent is ^{truly} present. And ^{truly} powerful in you. More powerful than sin, ^{and more powerful than temptation} more powerful than death. More powerful than guilt and fear and shame. When you believe Christ is Lord over you and all your world.

I asked her where God's rule in her life began.

She told me of the witness of a realestate agent. With Christ all things are possible the agent had said.

She heard him!
She remembered. She believed.

She began to seek God's word, she prayed, and that plant of faith grew. Through years she sought understanding, obedience, love and the plant of faith grew.

Day by day, she the prisoner was being set free. Free from shame, free to begin to forgive herself as Christ forgave her. For more and more she believed that Christ had taken all of her sin, and guilt and shame upon him on the cross. Through his cross she was daily becoming God's new creation, where Jesus ruled over all.

Because a real estate agent was sent by God, and spoke of Christ.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Jesus who sent the twelve, who sent the seventy, sends every one of ^{you} us to every person and every place where he is himself is about to come. He has promised that he will be with you, always. Through you he will make his dwelling in hearts that are hurting. Faith will be born, God's kingdom will come. Nothing will be impossible through Christ.

Thaks be to God.