

Week of 1/22/06

Another full week here at 2nd Thief Ministries and we thank the Lord for His goodness. We are still in the planning stages for the Couples Motorcycle Retreat Ride and are now leaning towards having the Ride in June. There are schedule conflicts and we are trying to work around them to accommodate as many people as possible. The **"Sight and Sound Outreach for Senior's"** (and friends and families) is firm for May and we just learned of a group from the Shenandoah Valley Area that is interested in joining us!

While there are a lot of logistics involved in planning these events it is truly a joy to be able to coordinate them. We have seen first hand how the desire to grow stronger in our faith, coupled with great fellowship (and good food), creative Gospel presentations and/or scenic locations that reveal God's Majesty results in blessings all around.

Congratulations to our own Tony Gooden, who is the Deputy Director of Finance here at 2nd Thief, and his family. He and his wife, after prayerfully considering the matter, have decided to adopt another child from China. It is the desire of the Ministry to "chronicle" this process here on the website to share in the joy of this blessing with him and his family. We also would like to be a resource for others who are also prayerfully considering adopting a child from China or from any other country. Please join with us here as this great adventure unfolds. If you are aware of any families thinking of adopting in this manner share this Ministry website with them.

There was **another new arrival at the Gooden home** last week. Tony took delivery of a new '06 Harley-Davidson Ultra Classic (Peace Officers Edition) on Friday of last week. Tony is a motorcycle enthusiast (pardon me...Tony corrected me..."Harley Rider") and he has been waiting a long time for the opportunity to own an Ultra Classic (Harley's top-of-the-line touring bike).

I had the privilege of seeing the bike on Friday as he stopped by my residence on his way home. Needless to say he was humbly ecstatic about his new "ride." You know we had to drink some coffee to celebrate and talk about the upcoming motorcycle season. There is one thing I need to point out. Tony did pray about this before he did anything. He confidently knows that this Harley will be used as **a tool for the Lord and not a toy** (we do have an active motorcycle outreach at 2nd Theif Ministries).

That is the very same message I got when I purchased a motorcycle several years back. I had been away from the sport for awhile, but every year I "got the fever." I too prayed for many a year to get another bike, but was impressed in my heart that the answer was "No." When I discerned that the Lord gave the "go ahead" it was with the same provisions. He allowed me to enjoy the sport of motorcycling, but it was not for me to enjoy alone. It was to be used as **a tool to share the love of God** with others who ride.

Isn't the Lord wonderful that He will **"give you the desires of your heart"** (literally put the desires into your heart). And He then can use these desires not only for us to enjoy, but will further His Kingdom through us if we will just let Him (or "kick back and enjoy the ride").

Moving on...I have the privilege of interacting with many different people in the course of a week via the phone, email and in-person on a wide range of topics. These "topics" run the spectrum from the day-to-day administration of the Ministry, you know filling out State and Federal forms (**rendering unto Caesar what is Caesars**), purchasing supplies, to planning outreaches and offering Biblical counsel to people that are facing extremely challenging issues in their lives.

One such recent "interaction" involved an email that arrived on Friday from a beautiful sister in the Lord that lives in Maryland. She emailed me to advise me that the movie **"End of the Spear"** was opening in selected theaters around the country. Some of you may be familiar with this and some not, but bear with me regardless of what your knowledge is on this subject. I am going to include excerpts from an attachment that was with the email.

A major film, called **End of the Spear**, will be launched January 20. I believe God will use it in a big way. It depicts the effects of the grace of God in very powerful and spectacular ways.

The story begins in 1956, when five Christian missionaries gave their lives in an Ecuadorian jungle, attempting to bring the gospel to the Waodani stone-age people. At that time they were the most violent tribe on Earth -- and yet they became the most loving and peaceful!

The missionaries made friendly contact, but something went terribly wrong. The Waodani speared them to death. A tragedy?

Yes, but God turns everything to good, for the blessing of many and for His glory, and this was no exception.

God used this tragedy to motivate more people to become missionaries than any other event in modern history -- perhaps ever. He also used two women to complete the work of the five martyred missionaries, bringing the Waodani to himself. So the deaths of those five men did more to advance the kingdom of God than their lives ever could.

God's ways are so great!

But the story doesn't end there. It seems God is about to use the tragedy that happened 50 years ago to help hundreds of thousands -- maybe millions -- to come to know Christ in our day, using *The End Of The Spear*. It is a major motion picture (production cost \$12 million) that tells the story of God's grace from the perspective of the Waodani.

Beginning January 20, *End of the Spear* will be shown in theaters across the United States. If it does well it will be accepted by many other theaters, but it must do well right from the start.

This is where you and I come in. We can make the film do well. Our prayers can make it prosper, and also we can do something to answer our own prayers. We can work together to get people to go see the movie.

My family and I did go see the movie on Saturday. Not only was it visually appealing and well acted, but there was a much more compelling aspect to it. The Gospel regarding the Son of God was presented in a lovingly humble manner that truly glorified God and spoke to your heart. And you know what? **The name of Jesus** was not mentioned once. At first that detail really bothered me.

A story is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. He was visiting a village with a new monk in tow. They went around meeting with various villagers, stopping to offer and encouraging word or help with a chore. By the end of the day the young monk was "bothered" by what had gone on (or rather what he thought had *not* gone on) during the course of the day.

The young monk said somewhat contemptuously to St. Francis, "We have spent the whole day visiting in the village. You talked with the

people and helped with some chores, but you did not preach the Gospel to anyone."

St. Francis acknowledged what the young monk said, but retorted, "**Preach the Gospel, use words when you have to.**"

The point being that *demonstrating* his love for God and for the villagers was a stronger message of the Gospel than mere words and no action. The Scriptures put it this way, "we are living epistles read of men."

After considering this matter before the Lord I was reminded that in the Book of Esther the Lord's name is not mentioned once.

You know the story of Esther. She was a Jewish girl who becomes a princess in a kingdom that was getting ready to eradicate all the Jews in the land. Mordecai, her uncle, tells her to plead for the lives of their people before the King. The only problem being if she came before the King without being requested it could cost her life. Let's pick up the story in chapter 4 starting at verse 13, "Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position **for such a time as this?**"

Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go; gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. **And if I perish, I perish.**"

The bottom line here is that the five missionaries and Esther understood that they were placed where they were by God for "such a time as this." They understood that **their lives were in God's hands** and "if I perish, I perish."

The rest of the story for Esther was that she *was received* by the King and the lives of the Jews were spared.

The rest of the story for the five missionaries in Ecuador was they "lost" their lives and the entire tribe was "saved."

What is your story? Do you know that you were created for "such a time as this? Do you understand that you too can (and were created

to) be an instrument in God's hand to seek and save the lost? Do you realize that where you are right this very moment in your life is a place that the Lord will mightily work through you if you let Him?

Jesus said in Matthew 16:25, "If you try to keep your life for yourself, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for me, you will find true life." (NLT)

My heart's desire is that we all will be the "living answers" to the following prayer written by St. Francis of Assisi.

LORD, make us instruments of Your peace.
Where there is hatred, let us sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is discord, union;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that we may not seek to much
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen

Godspeed.

Preacher.