

February 4th, 2019 ACTS Bookstudy – The Great Spiritual Migration

Closing prepared by Colin Outtrim,

We have been reading about WE versus THEM and the atrocities committed in the name of Christianity.

In trying to express the sentiment of WE vs THEM I found a hymn in More Voices #111 entitled **“A voice was heard in Ramah”**.

My research found that Ramah means hill and could apply to many locations. But one such town was an ancient fenced city on a height of land about 8 km north of Jerusalem. The fact that it is set on a hill with walls surrounding its core indicates that the people had a perceived need for protection. An “US versus THEM” psychology. The hymn I refer to is based, somewhat, on the story in Matthew 2 about the Massacre of the Innocents. Modern scholars suggest the story was a myth or fabrication of folklore. It was probably based on the story of the Pharaohs killing of the Hebrew children as told, much later, in the first century AD.

The hymn is a blend of :

- an old testament story of the return of the Israelites to Jerusalem and
- also the New Testament story during early life of Jesus speaking to the people of Ramah.

Verse 1.

- the town of Ramah is in turmoil and pain.
- The children of Ramah are weeping.
- Herod is ruling the region, but he fears the infant king.
- The great devastation of war and expulsion was based on fear and anger.

Verse 2. God could

- hear the crying,
- see the death,
- feel the conflict,
- see the wars throughout the nation
- and is saddened when fear and anger met.

Verse 3.

- When everyone in the nation is weeping, the whole world also suffers
- Then speaking to Jesus, the people of Ramah say “as we serve our enemy we are also serving YOU”.
- So, may we not ignore them, nor turn our eyes away,
- but, help us labor for THEM to bring a better day.

Verse 4. Finally

- The people speaking “Oh, Jesus, Prince of Peace you lead us in ways of truth and grace.
- May we be brave to practice your peace in every place.
- To love each fear-filled nation to serve each troubled street.
- How great the celebration would be when peace and justice meet.”

Coincidentally, last Sunday Debbie Stockdale’s Message and the Readings from Luke 4 defined a time when Jesus spoke-out against the people and the leaders of his home town Nazareth. He criticized them for their selfish treatment of the people of the neighboring countryside. A famine and suffering had been present for 3½ years and fighting was rampant. The leaders asked the people to expel Jesus for his be good to your neighbor and all those different from them. The leaders asked that Jesus be taken to the cliffs overlooking the town where he should be hurled off the edge. Jesus went with the people but as they reached the edge, the people did not push him over the brink. He turned and was allowed to walk away unharmed.

The crowd had come to the realization that the leaders of Nazareth had been wrong. WE versus THEM was not right and Jesus' message had been heard.

In Brian McLaren's book we see many references to WE versus THEM. On page 91 and 92 I note the following segments.

Jesus empowered others. Overturning the understanding of God's supreme dominance and sovereignty. The new image of God was Jesus way.

One day all humanity will become convinced that the way of

- *violence and domination,*
- *enslavement and exploitation,*
- *slavery and privilege are*
- *ugly, wrong, suicidal and ungodly.*

Jesus' way of self-giving was right, it is a way to earn the trust of humanity.

IS IT A STRETCH that Brian McLaren says:

We will ultimately migrate toward the way of Jesus and eliminate the WE versus THEM ways of thinking.

For me this is a UTOPIAN view that will not be achievable. Mankind has always found ways to disagree and religion is an easy point of fundamental disagreement to point at. Just my thoughts.

Colin Outtrim