

Devotions with Matt

April 24, 2020

THE FRONT LINES

Gun shots ring out nearby and people duck for cover. An explosion happens and people back away. A thief is in a neighborhood so people make sure their doors are locked. Whenever something dangerous, and potentially deadly happens, most people tend to take cover and look for safety. It is human nature. It is our survival instinct.

Occasionally you hear stories of heroes running toward the fight or danger. A soldier runs toward the battle. A cop runs toward the gunshots. A homeowner steps up when the thief enters to protect the family. A doctor or a nurse runs toward the sick and wounded. If you are one of those mentioned above- thank you.


We love hero stories. Many of the highest grossing movies of all time are based on heroes. We thank heroes with our highest honors and medals. We all strive to be one. Heroes reflect our greatest desires. We want wrongs to be righted. We want evil to be defeated. We want the innocent, vulnerable and weak protected. We want justice. The Bible says that there is no greater love than the one who is willing to lay their lives down for their friends.

Here in the book of Matthew chapter 4 we see Jesus running to the front lines of the battle. It is the start of His ministry. He goes out to the countryside and begins to heal the sick and relieve suffering and pain among the most vulnerable. He runs into the middle of the fight. The Scripture here in Matthew also says Jesus drove out demons and preached the Good News. This was no ordinary fight- this was a spiritual battle. This was a cosmic war. A battle of life and death for all eternity. No weapon, no medicine and no other hero would win this fight. Only Jesus can be the hero here.

The fight is against sin and death. The illnesses there in the story and the illnesses with us today all come from one starting point: sin. How do I know this? We see from the Book of Genesis in the Garden of Eden that everything God created was good. It was perfect. No sin, no death, no pain, suffering or illness. All was good in the Garden. It may come as a huge surprise to us that Adam and Eve didn't find that to be enough. They wanted more. They wanted to be like God. While we remain in quarantine away from friends and family and while many are worried about their livelihoods and what's next, as we see a broken and fallen world, we wonder- who wouldn't want a perfect world?

But sin they did, and that perfect world was tainted with it. Illness and suffering and pain were now here. The genie was out of the bottle and there was no way to put it back in. Many have tried. Many have thought that being good would be the remedy. Many thought that running to the battle lines and helping the hurting, the sick and the vulnerable would be the cure. If enough of us ran to the battle we could defeat sin and its effects. But here we are still in a broken world. No amount of human effort can win this war.

When Jesus ran to the fight and began healing that day he wasn't saying that healing the sick was the message. He wasn't saying that reliving people's pain was the remedy. The miracles He performed were all signs pointing to His larger message: The Kingdom of God is now here. The Kingdom of God, where Jesus is



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Colossians 1:13-14

King, is taking us back to the Garden of Eden before the Fall of Man, before sin entered the world and broke God's perfection. The healing Jesus did that day in the crowds was part of His larger message that He was going to lay His life down, not just for His friends, but for all humanity. The fight was on, Jesus ran toward it, and victory would be His.

One day Jesus will return and with Him is His promise to make all things new again. New again does not mean something different, but something that had once been. He will restore all things back to the way it was in the beginning. He will restore things to perfection where there is no more sin and death, no more illness, suffering and pain. Jesus ran to the front lines that day to begin the battle. He ran toward the fight knowing it would end up with Him on the cross. The cross is the defeat of all things broken. The enemy is now in its death throes - defeated but not quite dead. He ran to the front lines knowing that one day, when He returns, all of His enemies, and ours, will be totally defeated. Jesus is the only one who can, and is, winning this war. He is the only hero in this story.

“¹³ For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴ in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.” Colossians 1:13-14

In Christ,

Matt