

Where are the struggles in your life? Does they concern illness, work, relationships or something else? Where are you being called to do battle, and where do you hope that someone else will take care of such battles for you?

All around us there are struggles and skirmishes, battles and wars. There are critical conflicts which cannot be ignored and others we know will not be as important tomorrow as they seem today. But when the stakes are high, many are called to make a difference for one side or another. What struggles are you called to serve in? What price are you willing to pay for something of value and meaning to you?

God always calls his people to step up to the plate in such efforts. Exodus is such an example. Israel was called out of slavery and given a holy purpose for its existence. They were called to be a nation of priests in a holy war that would bring LIGHT to the NATIONS. God called them not only to be strong for their journey but to realize that their journey would inspire many others.

What a leap of faith! In their world, priests were the link between heaven and earth. Priests offered sacrifices to appease the gods. Priests handled holy things and knew the sacred rituals. Out of Egypt, God called faithful people to be a living link between heaven and earth -- to lift up the blessings of life and learn the sacred rituals of forgiveness, servant love and faith!

We are blessed with that same HOLY TOUCH – by a baby in a manger and an empty tomb. Baptism proclaims *"Because I (the holy one) have touched you, YOU are holy!"* Our call is no different than that of Israel or those first 12 disciples –gifted by grace we are called into holy service.

Typically, most people aren't inclined to invest anything of value unless certain of the payoff. We either look for a product in our hands or a deduction for our taxes, and then we are ready to sacrifice for the greater good. Jesus, on the other hand, surrendered his divinity at Bethlehem, and his humanity at Calvary with no guarantee that anyone would notice or respond. What love! What a gift!

In a day where selfishness, anger, greed and force are the powers that fight battles, we are called to wage a holy war through the actions of sacrificial love! Baptism is our new Red Sea crossing. Calvary is the new Sinai. The wind and fire of Pentecost announce God's call for us to be priests to the entire world!

Jesus gave gives clear instructions for disciples; three simple commands to his disciples: Proclaim the GOOD NEWS! Cure the sick! Cast out demons. In other words, "tell the story of Easter, reach out to those wounded in the battle of life, and remember Satan (and not the people he troubles) is the real enemy!

Stephen Hawking, a brilliant scientist confined to a wheelchair by a form of ALS, said that before his disease, *"life was an exercise in sheer boredom, too much alcohol, and too little work. When given only a few years to live his life underwent a radical change.*

In a 1979 interview he said *"I am happier now than before battling this disease. **When one's expectations are reduced to zero, one appreciates everything one has. Suddenly each day became precious and meaningful.**"*<sup>1</sup>

***EACH of us begins with death – "expectations zero!"*** But Easter battled death with a holy love and God promises that "now even death brings life!" Each day IS holy and all who celebrate Easter are called to handle the holy gift of life! We are to be a nation of priests to all we meet. So...where do we begin?

Remember, what makes something holy is God's touch. Begin by remembering how God has "touched you!" Continue by asking where God is calling you to be a priest – to handle the holy gifts you are blessed with.

Maybe your "holy war" is a battle against cancer, or standing firm as a parent to protect your children (even from themselves.) Maybe your servant love is friendship with a stranger, or a ministry here at Zion. Maybe it is in a Bible study discussion, or your invitation to a co-worker who hasn't accepted Jesus.

We are always moved to tears by the surprising testimony of others. We are overwhelmed by those who are moved by the Gospel to collect food for Loaves and Fishes, or renovate houses for Habitat for Humanity, or volunteer at Ministry with Community or the Gospel Mission. And some teach Sunday School, or cook for midweek or funeral dinners, while others sew dresses and quilts, or mentor children who need a hand at home or school.

But each of us is sent, with our gifts and opportunities and whatever we do as a response to the Gospel will be a blessing to whomever we touch. Just as we find out that God blesses us by the touch of those we realize are serving us in return.

However it happens, when we lift up the love of Jesus, as our motive for living, we are casting out Satan and instead planning a harvest that God will bless.

You are called to be a worker. Not someone else, you! Don't worry about success or failure, simply answer the call to serve. This is not about recruiting members for a club, or signing up members for a congregation. We are called to simply tell the story of Jesus love, heal the sick, and lift high the cross!

Jesus erected no structures and copyrighted no programs. He simply proclaimed Good News and lived to serve rather than be served. He spent time with those no one else cared about and taught those who knew his love to share that love in a similar fashion. That seemed to be enough – and that is his call to us as well.

During our building renovation, some very interesting things happened. One was that one of our members suggested that we pray in our worship services, every week for the contractors and workers. So we did. One of the electrical contractors took me aside one day and said "I am working here, and on a project at a church up north." He said, "I want you to know the difference between these two communities is like night and day.

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<sup>1</sup> Omni magazine, Feb 1979/ p. 46

At the other church, they argue with everything I do, insist that they could do it better, and fight and argue with each other. In this congregation, you have been supportive, friendly, and are praying for our workers that none get hurt – you have something special going on here.

What a reminder of the many ways to share the love of Jesus, and the power that comes from disciples simply being who they are.

May your life celebrate its holy purpose by living with a holy passion for the world and everyone you can touch! For that is a love and a story the world is dying to receive! Go in peace. Reach out with Jesus' love!

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