

Starving for the Plunder

By T. M. Moore

I have been struck lately with the number of times that the Scriptures liken our lives in the Kingdom to victors in a great warfare who are gathering and distributing the spoil taken from the enemy. The picture that emerges is like a fantastic free-for-all of riches in which those who are on the Lord's side fairly revel in taking possession of that which formerly belonged to our vanquished enemy.

The Lord Himself encouraged us to think this way about our callings in the Kingdom of God. In Matthew 12:28,29, Jesus likens Himself to One Who has bound the strong man and has begun the business of plundering his house. Having vanquished Satan at the Temptation in the wilderness, Jesus was now on a rampage, taking for His own possession everything He could lay hands on that had formerly been under the control of the Archfiend. And with good reason: He had been promised the ends of the earth for His possession (Ps.2:8)! There was a lot of plundering to do!

The Old Testament looks forward to this plundering of the spoils. We see it, for example, in Psalm 68:11,12: "The Lord gives the command; the women who proclaim the *good* tidings are a great host: 'Kings of armies flee, they flee, and he who remains at home will divide the spoil.'" In a difficult passage (exacerbated by poor English translations), Isaiah envisions the Lord receiving great nations as His spoil and strong powers at His possession (Isaiah 53:12), which He divides with the saints of God (Daniel 7:13-18). Psalm 111:6 reinforces this vision, "He has made known to His people the power of His works, in giving them the heritage of the nations."

This spoiling and plundering, we can imagine, given what the metaphor suggests, was not meant to be a relaxed or merely casual endeavor. When there is booty to be grabbed, it's every man for himself! Perhaps the best picture of how this image ought to affect our view of life in the Kingdom of God can be found in 2 Kings 6 and 7. The city of Samaria was under siege by an implacable foe. Certain destruction was nigh. So desperate were the people that they fought with one another and even ate their own children. The rulers merely wrung their hands in frustration and despair. Then some unlikely heroes emerged. Four lepers, resigned to death one way or the other, decided to throw themselves on the mercy of the army of Aram, hoping against hope that they might be spared because of their miserable condition. What they discovered instead filled them with rejoicing and created a mad rush to plunder.

The army of Aram had been vanquished in the night by the power of God and had fled for their lives, leaving all their possessions behind- riches, weapons, food and clothing, personal property of all kinds, a vast treasure of booty and spoil! When they finally realized the importance of their discovery, they limped back to Samaria, announced the great victory, and called them people to join them in the spoil. The city emptied in a moment as men and women, young and old rushed to collect the plunder and revel in the overthrow of their enemies and the salvation of their own lives.

In fact, the Scriptures tell us that, in the frenzy of plundering the Arameans, only one of the citizens of Samaria lost his life. This was the gatekeeper who had doubted the Word of the Lord from the prophet Elisha (7:1,2,17). His refusal to believe what God had promised resulted in his destruction. Meanwhile, the people of Samaria, starving for the plunder, rejoiced in the goodness of the Lord and reveled in His largess.

Jesus said that those who gain the Kingdom of God are the ones who take it by violent and forceful action (Matthew 11:12). Our generation of comfortable evangelicals knows very little of this kind of aggression in the name of the King. We're too busy whining about our every little pain and trouble, looking around for someone to blame or someone to label, or discovering new ways of spending our meager resources on ourselves. Safe within our fortress churches, we're starving spiritually and seem almost to have given up the fight. We've circled the wagons and bolted the gates against the armies of our postmodern world, and we await the inevitable, keeping one eye on heaven, hoping for the return of the Lord.

It's time to sound the victory, point in the direction of the retreating armies of Satan, and envision the spoil of plunder of desperate souls, powerful cultures and institutions, and incalculable riches that are to be gathered up and distributed in the name of the Lord of glory and for the purposes of His just and righteous Kingdom. And let him who doubts or scorns this mighty calling suffer the fate of all who do not believe the Word and promises of the sovereign, victorious, King of glory.

People of God, are we starving for the plunder that Christ has won and is even now distributing to His faithful followers?