

Pastor Letter: Calling Sacred Assemblies (10/23/22)

During my first call, I was invited to join a group of ministers who had organized the Evangelical Ministers Fellowship (EMS). A vast array of different Christian denominations was represented in this group that met once a month. We began gathering weekly for an all-night prayer, fasting, and communion service that was designed to combat the spread of evil that had invaded the city, schools, and churches. The laity from those churches represented in the organization also gathered for fasting and prayer and then later in the night joined the ministers for a combined communion service.

Using the scriptures from the book of Joel, the group organized several sacred assemblies that highlighted different organizations such as schools, branches of government, police departments, homeless shelters, etc. We took our theme from the prophet, Joel who wrote, "Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the aged; gather the children, even infants at the breast," (2:15-16).

In preparation for one of these sacred assemblies we had gathered for prayer, when I experienced a vision of vivid colors while a certain evangelist was praying out loud. I saw bright green, deep sky blue, and light brown colors but no clear image. A week later we arrived in an outdoor amphitheater two hours before the sacred assembly was scheduled to start, in order to pray over the event. A large thunder storm was approaching from the west. Every part of the event was shrouded in prayer, including the approaching stormy weather. Miraculously, just before the people began to arrive at the facility, the thunder storm parted and went north and south of our location. We were blessed with blue skies the rest of the evening for our spiritual event.

Soon hundreds of people were filling the tan stone seats that formed a semicircle around the covered stage area. The participating pastors began taking their respective seats behind the pulpit that was placed at the front center stage. We were patiently waiting for our primary speaker for the evening to take his place behind the pulpit. I could not believe my eyes when the speaker finally bounded upon the stage and stepped to the pulpit in order to begin the program.

Our keynote speaker for the evening was the evangelist who was praying when I experienced the vision of colors a week before. He was dressed in a deep sky-blue suit. From my view behind the speaker, I saw the speaker's blue suit, the bright green grass between the stage, and the first row of brown stone seats, filled with people. What I previously saw as a formless colored image was now a spectacular panorama of bright blue, green and light brown colors.

Mere words cannot express the divine spiritual power that filled the amphitheater that hot summer evening. God's people had faithfully gathered to seek the Lord's presence, ask for forgiveness, praise his holy Name, and prayerfully request the Almighty's blessings. Joel writes, "Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing. Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and relents from punishing. Who knows whether he will not turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him," (2:12-14).

The EMS continued to meet for weekly all-night prayer, fasting, and communion services as well as hosting sacred assemblies in various locations. We experienced

some truly remarkable blessings during our scheduled events. We were living witnesses to Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh, "Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit," (2:28-29).

Many of the local churches grew in number as well as missional outreach programs to the local communities. The participating congregations began to focus their attention outwardly as opposed to directing their efforts inwardly. Humanitarian programs were formed that enhanced the Christian mindset which in turn benefited the secular and political organizations. These successful programs helped to develop a closer relationship between local Christian churches and the secular and political organizations. People began to truly trust one another.

EMS further developed church unity with combined Lenten, Easter, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other special holiday worship services. Local congregations became more comfortable with pastors from other denominations preaching at their pulpits during these special services. We promoted our common doctrines instead of what separated us by our various theologies. The one tenet we could all agree on was a statement that is in our passage from Joel, "Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved," (v. 32).

We could all learn a valuable lesson from the book of Joel. Regardless of whatever hardships or trials we face during our daily walk with the Lord, we can always turn from our negative experiences and seek Almighty God's presence. Fasting and prayer can put us in the right attitude to embrace the Lord's grace, mercy, and love.

Remember and trust in the prophet, Joel's words, "Then everyone who calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved," (v. 32).

Pastor Larry