

Judas Was A Hero?

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Treachery is a virtue. That was a tribal worldview of certain tribes in New Guinea described by Don Richardson in his book, *Peace Child*. Cannibalistic tribesmen would unwittingly visit a neighboring tribe who would, as they called it, “fatten the pig for the kill.” The hosting tribe would repeatedly invite the tribesmen to eat with them, and it would happen so frequently that the visitor would think that he was developing good friends. Then, after a while on one of those visits when he had become sufficiently portly, the hosting tribe would spear their guest to death and eat him. They actually enjoyed the whole operation of making their neighbor a patsy for their betrayal.

When missionaries came to these tribes, and told them the story of Jesus, the tribesman whistled with approval as Judas betrayed Jesus. Judas was their hero, and Jesus was a clueless mark whom Judas had played like an old violin. When treachery is a virtue and when Judas is the champion, how does a missionary communicate that Judas was the villain and that Jesus was the hero? God had prepared the New Guinea tribesmen for just such a reversal.

When two warring tribes wanted peace between themselves, a tribe would give one of their children to a family of the other tribe. That child was called the “Peace Child,” and if a member of the recipient tribe killed the Peace Child, even though the tribes valued treachery, such a killing was culturally defined to be a reprehensible and ignoble act. After a period of constant retaliatory killings had occurred between the tribes, a missionary learned that the Peace Child was the way to at least bring a temporary cease fire. And then it clicked! Humankind was at war with God, and God sent His Peace Child to earth to bring peace between God and man, and Judas had betrayed the Peace Child and was responsible for His death. Judas became the scoundrel, and Jesus the protagonist. As a result of this missionary’s faithfulness, many of those New Guinea tribal peoples came to a saving faith in Christ. The only reason so many of those individuals are now our brothers and sisters in Christ is because Don Richardson followed a principle of ministry that the Apostle Paul outlined in Romans 15:20-21 where he wrote:

And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation; but as it is written, "THEY WHO HAD NO NEWS OF HIM SHALL SEE, AND THEY WHO HAVE NOT HEARD SHALL UNDERSTAND."

Through Paul’s missionary efforts and that of others like him, many all around the globe have heard the gospel and believed. It didn’t always happen right away. In fact, Paul makes it clear that it is a process in which God is causing the ultimate outcome.

Today, we live next door to neighbors and we work in cubicles where there are many who “have not heard.” Recently, I was at a Board meeting for a missionary organization where another Board member lamented, “The church is all talk and no action.” He was referring to the importance of evangelism, but few actually get around to sharing their faith with another person. How are we doing at actually sharing the good News of Jesus with others? How are you doing at it? Our youth just gave us a glowing report of how they were sharing Christ with others around them. We listened to their stories and saw the joy in their faces. We also heard of a change of heart from one of our adult leaders. Who would deny them that privilege? Who would deny you that blessing.

So many around us live within a stone’s throw of the gospel at a Bible-teaching church, on the airwaves, on TV, or right next door. Yet for all the proximity to the Good News, many have “no news” and many “have not heard.” The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

"...we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. (1 Thessalonians 2:2-4 NASB)

May we put into practice the same boldness that God gave to Paul in such a way that God, who examines our hearts, is delighted.

Editor Notes: Larry Hoskins is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary and has been the Senior Pastor of Grace Church Aurora for sixteen years. He also serves on the CMF Board of Directors.