

TWO DUCKS AND A CHICKEN 2018



Recently three unexpected visitors showed up where I live. The two mallard ducks and a chicken made a funny looking trio. I got the impression the ducks were the chicken's protectors, for I surmised the red chicken may have lost all of the feathers on its back because of run in with the rowdy rooster up the road that I hear each morning. I felt somewhat sorry for him so I fed him muesli and some crackers that I had in the house.

Later that day the trio was back for supper so I fed them again. As it got near dusk they ambled back to their home about 100 yards up the road. The next morning when I went outside, they all came rushing towards me from the woods around the house. Breakfast was served again, but this time also with some bread for the ducks. As the evening before, they returned again for supper. Later I saw the chicken on the top of the porch railing, looking around, as if to say: 'I'd like some more food.' The next day when I came outside the chicken raced toward me and stayed right at my ankles. I decided to go for a walk to get away from her but after walking down the road a bit, I turned around and saw the ducks and chicken following right behind me. It was then that the chicken flapped his feathers and came up towards my face, which spooked me somewhat. I knew right then that I could no longer feed my new found friends, especially the chicken who almost seemed to be stalking me.

They returned the next couple days, but I did not feed them. The plan seemed to work as I did not see them for a couple of days, but then one morning I was startled to look out and see the chicken on the porch railing. I went out to see the two ducks who were also there and spoke kindly to them but did not feed them. They left in a short while and I have not seen them since.

A few days later while I was mowing the lawn, I thought of the similarity the ducks and chicken had with those people who followed Jesus around. It was not surprising that the crowds flocked to be around Jesus. He brought hope to those who felt trapped in the drudgery of daily life and spoke of a kingdom where the poor and the downcast were welcomed and shown favor. He also performed unheard of miracles for the physical and practical needs of the people. In one instance Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover Feast.

Many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed on his name [identified themselves with his party] after seeing his signs (wonders, miracles) which he was doing. - Amplified version

But Jesus would not entrust himself to them for he knew all men. He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in man. NIV - John 2:23-25

Jesus had perfect discernment and wisdom which came from the fullness God's Spirit operating in him. - Isaiah 11:1-4.

*He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears. v. 3b*

Jesus knew that most of the people who professed 'belief' in him had a **+superficial faith** based merely on their own self benefit such as healing and bread. Many thought he must be the promised Messiah and King who had come to free them from their Roman oppressors. Others thought he might be one of the prophets. **They were thinking of the temporal, Jesus came to bring eternal**

realities to the forefront. Yes, Jesus performed miracles out of compassion, but **He wanted people to taste and see the goodness of God and his kingdom.** However, they would hear from Jesus that they needed to forsake their own lives and follow Him all the way to the Cross and beyond. Much like the ducks and chicken, they only were around to get their own desires satisfied.

*From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.
- John 6:66*

It is much the same today. people will flock to miracle services but fewer will come to hear a message on discipleship. **Salvation is a free gift** from God, but **to follow Jesus as a disciple will cost you everything.** In the book of Acts the word witness is used many times. It comes from the Greek word 'martus', which also means martyr. True disciples of Jesus count the cost and commit to him even if it means martyrdom, for there is no turning back. Jesus expects his believers to be overcomers, as evidenced by his messages to the 7 churches in Asia Minor (Turkey today) Revelation 2-3. We must be **willing to die for Jesus** (Revelation 12:11) but just as important, we must be **willing to live for Jesus as 'living sacrifices'** (Romans 12:1). The enemy of our souls will be right there to accuse and discourage us.

They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. - Revelation 12:11 NIV

They conquered him completely through the blood of the Lamb and the powerful word of his testimony. (a) They triumphed because they did not love and cling to their own lives, even when faced with death. - Rev. 12:11 The Passion Translation

Footnotes: (a) Rev. 12:11 As translated from the Aramaic. The Greek is: **'the word of their testimony'**. It is the faithful testimony of Jesus that has the power to destroy the works of the devil.

In our modern era, two men of God have lived sacrificial lives on behalf of those who are persecuted for Jesus. (many of my favorite authors are not ivory tower academics but those who have been out on the battle lines in the world, just like Jesus, who was in touch with the common people).

Richard Wurmbrand - He was tortured for Christ under the communists in Romania. He came to our church in Florida back in the 1980's and he wore no shoes as he sat and spoke because the communists had beaten his feet so bad while he was in prison. He started a ministry called **Voice of the Martyrs** which keeps the world informed about the issue of persecution to believers in the world.

Brother Andrew - For many decades, this Christian from Holland has been known as

God's Smuggler. He has led many others as they smuggled Bibles into communist countries. Now they are reaching more into Muslim countries where the Bible is a forbidden book. His book: **Is Life So Dear**, is a great challenge to live all out for Christ. The ministry name of Brother Andrew is called Open Doors. Here are some sobering statistics:

Countries in Africa, Asia and the Middle East are increasing persecution against Christians. Christian women are the most vulnerable, for their faith and gender.

In 2018, 3066 Christians were killed and 793 churches were attacked. The World Watch List says that 215 million Christians experience high level persecution in the countries on their list that are most hostile to Christians. Islamic oppression fuels persecution in 8 of the 10 worst countries on the list:

1. North Korea
2. Afghanistan
3. Somalia
4. Sudan
5. Pakistan
6. Eritrea
7. Libya
8. Iraq
9. Yemen
10. Iran

Pick a country and start praying! Note: you may be reading this many years later, but you can look up for yourself the latest such statistics. God Bless You!

johnbeckerink@yahoo.com

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