

The Lord's Long Game

‘A young deacon with few manners was passing the collection plate one Sunday. After passing the plate by a rich woman, he noticed that she did not put anything in. So he passed the plate by again with the same result. Not to be undone, he passed it by a third time. This last time she tried to tell him that she wasn’t going to put anything in the plate. Finally, the young deacon said, “If you aren’t going to put anything in, take something out—it’s for the heathen anyway”.’

Now that’s a word that we don’t much hear anymore. “Heathen” carries with it a connotation that heathens are uncivilized, and if they’re uncivilized, then it follows that we are civilized. Well, maybe. But all too often through more modern history it meant that Western, Christian societies were civilized, and all others were not. This is patently untrue. But when restricted to its actual and true, Biblical definition, it is true. For being heathen means being without God. With this corrected definition, just think. Many, perhaps even most of the people you come into contact with, hear on audio, and see on video, are heathens. That means that nearly everyone we see on tv shows, news programs, stage performances, musical concerts, on movie screens, even just walking down the street, are heathens. So, if all those people

are heathens, then why do we listen to them?

Or, have we become selective in whom we pay attention to? Good. We need to be very careful and vet the people we give our time to. Are they genuine, Bible-believing Christians? Are they led by Holy Spirit? Do they exhibit a humble spirit and a contrite heart? Is the love of Christ Jesus evident in the way they live their lives? Is the power of God at work in and through them? Do we hear the truth emanating from them? Remember truth comes only from God. If people do not check all these boxes, should we listen to them? But who can check all the boxes all the time?

Of course, no one is perfect. And even the best of Christians will from time to time get things wrong. It's inevitable. We are only human, and while we still live on this side of heaven, we will every now and then foul up. With that caveat in mind, our judgment of whom to follow needs to be attuned to those who fairly consistently check those boxes, excepting the occasional slip up.

So, while we naturally want to be nice, cordial and civil to everyone, to give them the benefit of the doubt, the fact is that most people around us are heathens, and therefore, the objects of the Lord's far-reaching love which seeks to save all who will turn back to Him. Such is illustrated perfectly by the account we read today in Luke 10. This mission trip is reported only by Luke, quite possibly because Luke was among the 72. It's a clear example that a great plethora of things occurred in our Lord Jesus' ministry that aren't written down in the Bible. We know here

clearly that while there was an inner circle of 12 disciples, there was a much larger cadre of followers who gave up their lives and livelihoods to accompany Lord Jesus and hang on His every word and act. It was from this larger group that Matthias was chosen to be the twelfth disciple to replace Judas Iscariot who betrayed Lord Jesus to the religious authorities resulting in the crucifixion.

Now the heathens all around us are still mostly civil, and won't likely decide to hit us over the head with any handy two by four or brick lying on the ground in case we should say something they don't like. And while there are some literally paid "professional" agitators, rioters and demonstrators that travel across the country from place to place to literally disturb the peace and stir up trouble, burn down buildings, murder a few people here and there, if police are the victims, all the better, still here in America, we're not liable to be attacked by bloodthirsty natives; though with the recent mindless riots demanding the right to murder babies after the Supreme Court last month rescinded the notion that our Constitution guaranteed women that freedom, one might wonder.

But that's exactly what John Chau encountered. He was a modern missionary who felt the call of God to literally give his life, to die, to willingly submit to being murdered, in order that the Gospel of Jesus Christ might be shared, if even for a few hours, with the people of North Sentinelese Island in the Indian Ocean. He knew what he was getting himself into. Indeed, he had spent years preparing himself for it, all the while knowing that all other

foreigners who'd ventured upon their island were quickly killed. On November 15, 2018 he made first contact with the islanders in a kayak. A Sentinelese boy shot an arrow at him which lodged in his Bible. John retreated and wrote in his journal, "God, I don't want to die. WHO WILL TAKE MY PLACE IF I DO? Forgive any of the people on this island who try to kill me, and especially forgive them if they succeed". The next day he wrote to his family, "You might think I am crazy in all this. But I think it's worth it to declare Jesus to these people. Please do not be angry at them or at God if I get killed, rather please live your lives in obedience to whatever He has called you to and I'll see you again when you pass through the veil. The eternal lives of this tribe is at hand and I can't wait to see them around the throne of God worshipping in their own language as Revelation 7:9-10 states. I pray none of you love anything in this world more than Jesus Christ". The next day, fishermen watching the island from their boats saw the natives burying his body. He was just 27 years old.

Now some might, hopefully none of us, but worldly people will declare his life a waste—cut off in his prime by a bunch of savages, yes, heathens, whose lives aren't worth saving because they're so backward and uncivilized. Just like preborn and just-born babies are worthless to worldly people. But as Christians, we know that every life is equal in value and equally precious to God, as He gave each of them His Spirit to come alive. Recall that John Chau referenced Revelation 7:9: "After this I saw a vast

crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands". Note it specifically states, "from every nation and tribe and people and language". That means there will be Sentinelese people there, praising the Savior, because John Chau answered the Savior's call to go to them, if even for just two days! For God "plays" the long game. He knows the end, the victory He has in mind, and it will come, eventually, at just the absolutely perfect time! We, are not to question Him, or His judgements, because we can't possibly know how He has arranged things. We have to do just one simple thing. Obey Him. That's it!

Look at Isaiah 66. The whole chapter is prophetic, and its scope covers thousands of years! He speaks of Jerusalem giving birth before there are even birth pains. Of a nation being born in a day. And yet, it happened on May 14, 1948! In many of our lifetimes! Did you notice? What a stupendous fulfillment of prophecy happened just 74 years ago! Can a nation be born in a day? And yet Israel was reborn, in a single day! At the exact moment God foreordained before time even began. And then God goes on to declare in verse 12: "I will give Jerusalem a river of peace and prosperity. The wealth of the nations will flow to her." This prophecy hasn't been fulfilled yet. But it will when the time is just perfect, after the Great Tribulation. And from the looks of things, it won't be too many more years in the future. It may well be that

some of us will still be alive on earth when He brings it to pass!

After Lord Jesus sent out the 72 disciples two-by-two on their mission trips to every town and place, they came back rejoicing, so excited, telling Him, in verse 17: “Lord, even the demons obey us when we use Your name!” And He told them/us, that eons earlier, before even Adam and Eve were created, He had seen satan fall from heaven. Since satan had then been stripped of his authority, all that authority and more Lord Jesus has given to us. “Over all the power of the enemy” He told us, in verse 19. Therefore, we should have no fear of the enemy, for the most important thing is that our names are registered in heaven. Yet, most of us still fear the enemy, and that’s because, just like he did with Eve and Adam, he fools us into believing lies. Little distortions sound plausible and grow bigger until we believe whoppers of baldfaced lies and forget who we are in Christ Jesus. And so satan manages to wrest control of much of our lives from us. And we suffer as a result. But even in this, our Lord Jesus is always with us to help us. As He is with America. For this country, unlike any other in the history of the world, was specifically founded and covenanted to God to spread the Gospel of Christ. And so God established us, on a day we celebrate tomorrow. And though many Americans have lost their way and become “heathens”, yet God has not forgotten us and He is not through with us. He loves us, and He will use us as a light to the nations yet again. All we, you, have to do is obey Him. Seek Him and pray. That’s it!

