

THE UPWARD CALL

*Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet;
but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead,
**I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
IN CHRIST JESUS.***

(Philippians 3:13-14 NASB)

TUC #09-1522

by – Stuart H. Pouliot

June 22, 2015

Kingdom Heart in the Midst of Broken Hearts

On the Friday, June 19th 6 o'clock news, our local NBC-affiliated station ran a superb extended coverage of the murders of the nine brethren among those holding a Bible study on June 17th at the historic Emmanuel AME church building in Charleston, SC. Without doubt, this was the best news coverage of a major tragedy that we have ever seen by a news organization. What made it such superb coverage was how they captured the heart of our fellow brethren in Charleston as they struggled with their own **broken hearts**. The spirit that came through the news coverage had an entirely different feel to it from coverage of other events of this magnitude. What made it so different was the spirit that came through these brethren that have been so wounded in their souls. As one loved one said: "Every fiber in my body hurts." The few family members that spoke, spoke of forgiveness and the mercy of God upon the killer's soul and his need for repentance. The love of God came through in the midst of great pain and sorrow, much like the King of kings who manifested God's Kingdom on earth, dying of a broken heart.

But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34 NASB)

As Jesus was beaten and dragged to the cross, He could have been filled in His heart with hate and vengeance. Instead, He looked out upon those railing against Him in such cruelty and venom and He asked His Father to forgive them. Why? Because they did not know what they were doing! They were about to kill the very Creator and Upholder of all things; the very One who is life itself. But His death was the salvation of the world, for He alone is the Savior (Deliverer) of the whole world. He is **the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world** (John 1:29). Read that verse carefully: He takes away sin. He doesn't just cover it or hide it; He takes it away entirely. As Hebrews 9:28 states: **He will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him**. This is the hope, that is, the expectation of all who are eagerly waiting for Him. Paul best sums it up for us.

For we are aware that the entire creation is groaning and travailing together until now. Yet not only so, but we ourselves also, who have the firstfruit of the spirit, we ourselves also, are groaning in ourselves, awaiting the sonship, the deliverance [redemption] of our body." For to expectation [hope] were we saved. Now expectation [hope], being observed, is not expectation [hope], for what anyone is observing, why is he expecting [hopes] it also? Now, if we are expecting [hope] what we are not observing, we are awaiting it with endurance [with perseverance we wait eagerly for it]." (Romans 8:22-25 CLV [NASB])

Truly, creation is presently groaning with us who with perseverance wait eagerly for the deliverance of our mortal bodies. Even more germane to our day, in spirit, we groan with our brethren in Charleston. We are all part of the one Body of Christ, joined to one Head who is one Lord and Savior. When one part of the Body suffers, we all suffer. When one part cries, we all cry. Over the death of His friend Lazarus, **Jesus wept** (John 11:35). When one part of the Body forgives, we all forgive, for our Head is saying: "Forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." Any other response is not from the heart of the Savior of the world or from the God and **Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name** (Ephesians 3:14-15). **God is love; there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear; love never fails** (1 John 4:8, 16, 18; 1 Corinthians 13:8).

As I watched the news coverage on Friday, in my spirit, I heard: **"This is a turning point."** I was given no qualifier to this turning. Is it a good turning or an evil turning? However, within my spirit, I sensed it is a good turning point, along the lines of Paul's encouragement.

Now we are aware that God is working all together for the good of those who are loving God, who are called according to the purpose. (Romans 8:28 CLV)

Good will come from this tragedy. Only time will tell how far and in what way this good will manifest.

Now, as I meditated further on this tragedy, I realized what touched my spirit so profoundly was that we were witnessing the character of the Kingdom of God in action. Today, many speak of the kingdom, but it seems that most of it is about getting things. For example, a mantra of the day is that the greatest transfer of wealth is about to occur as the wealth of the nations is given to the church. Another example is that believers are about to enter into the supernatural and do supernatural things. Seldom among those who push such things is it said that what truly and importantly matters is that we have and manifest the character of the King. I am not saying it is never said; however, it does seem to be drowned out by the many voices that are tired of waiting and want action now. To me, so much of this is a pretentious spirit that is devoid of the life of the King.

Consider Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom life.

You know that you have been taught, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I tell you not to try to get even with a person who has done something to you. When someone slaps your right cheek, turn and let that person slap your other cheek. If someone sues you for your shirt, give up your coat as well. If a soldier forces you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two miles. When people ask you for something, give it to them. When they want to borrow money, lend it to them. You have heard people say, "Love your neighbors and hate your enemies." But I tell you to love your enemies and pray for anyone who mistreats you. Then you will be acting like your Father in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both good and bad people. And he sends rain for the ones who do right and for the ones who do wrong. If you love only those people who love you, will God reward you for that? Even tax collectors love their friends. If you greet only your friends, what's so great about that? Don't even unbelievers do that? But you must always act like your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:38-48 CEV)

Love your enemies! This 21-year old is an enemy of those he killed and their loved ones who are in deep sorrow today. When some of the family members chose to openly forgive this man, they manifested the heart of the Father in heaven. This is the will of the Father done on earth as it is done in heaven. This is ***Thy Kingdom come!*** Love is what the Kingdom is all about. It is not about things; it is about heart, the heart of a loving God who so loves the world that He gave His only begotten Son and who continues to give His Son, no longer in death but in life.

Dear people of God, the Kingdom of God has come upon Charleston, SC. We are witnessing a taste of the Kingdom of Christ that is to come to earth and manifest in fullness in the age to come. Today, we only touch upon it, just as we only have an earnest of the Spirit within us. The good news is that the day is fast approaching when the earnest will be filled up in immortality and the conquerors of Christ will go forth in the fullness of the Spirit of Christ. Until then, let us seek to have and to manifest the character of the Kingdom, that is, the character of the King of kings to the fullest degree possible until that Day.

This does not imply that the days ahead for our brethren or for all of Charleston are going to be easy. We can only pray that the influence of the world and the many voices speaking from the spirit of the world will be drowned out by the love of Christ in action. May the Kingdom of God's Love in His Son prevail!

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. "Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. "Rejoice and be glad..." (Matthew 5:3-12 NASB)