

God's Hope for America Bus Tour - Invited to the Feast

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July 11, 2014



It certainly was a beautiful ceremony. With sound amplification prohibited by city ordinance, the 100 or so participants at our latest #godshopeforamerica holy ground prayer in Richmond had to stand a little closer together, concentrate a little harder, and listen a little more intently to the prayers and testimonies.

For my part, I tried to filter out the gentle susurrations of late evening traffic going around the leafy and historic Monroe Park, and to focus on a succession of sincere but painfully soft-spoken local pastors and community members.

Suddenly I was brought to full attention by Father Bayo Adrien, pastor of the Richmond Family Church, speaking loudly and clearly. Blessed with the Nigerian combination of dark, dark skin and white, white teeth, Bayo radiates with real warmth and appreciation and has a keen sense of being blessed by God. After years of celibacy as a priest, he was blessed in marriage a few years ago by Rev. and Mrs. Moon. “I too was once was lost,” Bayo said, “but now I can see, and I’m in my right mind.” Beside him, his slim Japanese wife Ayano smiled in quiet agreement.

Over the last few days we’ve been winding our way through the Carolinas and the Virginias towards Washington DC, and the half-way point of this amazing, challenging, crazy and beautiful Holy Ground pilgrimage. It’s been truly wonderful and soul-enlarging to meet up with old friends and make new ones, and especially rewarding to meet people who tell me “I haven’t been to church in years, but I felt I just had to come here.”

After our Richmond Holy Ground service was over, and the plentiful refreshments being eagerly consumed—OK, gobbled—I noticed that our gathering was somehow getting a little larger. Usually, it’s the other way round. People come to pray, and then they run on with their busy lives. But here in Richmond, two very different groups of people gradually started to swell the audience.

Several very intense young Christian women circled around with well-worn paperback Bibles, seemingly disinterested in our heathen fare of sushi, sandwiches and watermelon. Perhaps they had already eaten?

No, what they wanted to talk about was the end of days and the peril awaiting unbelievers, possibly such as myself?

Normally I make polite noises and move away from such folk, but something about the spirit of the Holy Ground compelled me to get engaged in conversation. I believe in God, believe in Jesus, and in fact I am convinced that divine judgment may come soon to America. True Father even said so in his 1973 speech "God's Hope for America," which we read every day. So we've been given some reprieve.

I've never been attracted by the idea of the rapture as some kind of "ejector seat" for a chosen few to save themselves from disaster. I know God is in hell himself because human sin and folly, and he can't even contemplate the idea of a heaven that excluded even one of his children. As a parent of five myself, I think I know how he must feel.

Moving on from these earnest but hard-edged lady warriors of the lord, I came across a happy band of brothers, homeless men delighted to see that free food, and lots of it, was about to be added to the equally free band shelter that serves as their bedroom. It was touching to see their simple pleasure as we explained that we had far too much food, and would they mind helping us eat it?

Suddenly, I was reminded of Jesus compelling vision of the Kingdom as a wedding feast to which many are invited, but few accept. The story can be found in both Luke 14 and Matthew 22:

"A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.'"

Then the king became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full.'

This parable is closer to my vision of God's Kingdom, the kingdom that is God's Hope for America, and for all nations. It is a wedding feast of joy, to which we are all invited, no exceptions. We must be careful, though, not to be so busy with our lives that we fail to show up on the day of the feast!