

Chronicles of Diversity

Your leadership weekly



A winter bridge

Fractured Rapture Tales **Pixelated History**

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Tale 4

I love ham. Not that processed stuff that comes in an oblong roll that is tied off at the ends. No, I mean real ham, the kind that is sliced off the bone and can be identified as coming from a real pig. The dried cured variety is by far the best. That spiral sliced meat that has found favor in recent years is advertised as ham that is much more convenient. So just how hard is it to slice ham anyway? What they don't tell you is that those little slices helps the cure to get deep into the meat a lot faster. Faster means they can make more hams in less time and charge you more money for the convenience. Spiral sliced ham, a pig marketers dream come true, not the ham connoisseurs delight.

I can eat that fresh sliced off the bone ham 364 days a year. In fact, to celebrate the day I began to learn about my heart condition, last week I had ham off the bone, along with three eggs, hash browns, and toast at Kettel's on Fourth avenue, just south of Seattle's two major temples to their sports gods, Safeco Field and Seahawks Stadium.

So what day do I not eat ham? Easter Sunday. I use my freedom in Jesus Christ, to refrain from eating ham in honor of those martyred by the church during the Inquisition. In Spain, at that time the required dish on Easter was ham or pork. It was an outward sign that you had converted to Christianity. Pork of course is not eaten by Moslems and Jews, and Orthodox Jews would risk on that Easter morn, the possibility of being killed for their faith. Out of respect for their sacrifice, and more to commemorate this dark day in church history, I do not eat ham on Easter Sunday, and I evangelize others to do the same. And did I mention that I evangelize others not to eat ham on Easter also?

Church history is not a very pretty sight is it? The Inquisition, the Crusades, the martyrs, the awful doctrines, sometimes I wonder why God let the church continue, filled with all those vain men

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and women, who raped, pillaged, and plundered in the name of Christianity, and the outright quest for power and wealth. I sure can't see anything good in church history. The problem is that I don't have the proper perspective. I am just one pixel in a digital photograph that covers the whole world, and all of creation. But it is also a pictograph that encompasses all of time.

In the perspective of my vanity, I have been taught to believe that it's all about me, and it really isn't. It's all about God's plan to redeem the world from the power of sin and death. In that dim light, whether I like it or not, I have a lot more in common with that crusader than I am accustomed to believe. Church history is a picture of God's grace one pixel at a time.

To change the metaphor, church history is an allegory of God's love, used to season the world just enough to understand His holiness. This in light of the passage we used last week in Song of Solomon 5:1, it is the one and only, first and last, church barbecue. It is just that we don't like the flavor of the barbecue rub. We are sympathetic to "You're So Vain" because we think we are so sweet, when in reality we don't like the salt in our sinful cuts.

To reinforce the truth of last week's song, that evening after my scrumptious ham breakfast, in Spokane, where I stay, I was asked to view what was billed as a funny "chick flick." The movie was "How to Lose a Guy in 10 Days" and starred Kate Hudson and Matthew McConaughey. I suppose I would call it a satire of a chick flick, but it also could serve as our personal side of that same Song of Solomon allegory. Lest I forget, the theme song for the movie was "You're So Vain."

The movie takes place in New York where Audie (Kate) is writing a magazine article on how to dump any man in ten days or less. At the same time Ben (Matthew) makes a wager that he can make a woman fall in love with him in that same ten day period. It's rated PG-13, so if you look at it as satire it becomes quite amusing. So much so, that I spent a lot of the movie trying to place Ben's Staten Island accent, which definitely wasn't from Staten Island, or even Jersey. Poor white Loseanna (sic) is the accent I came up with.

The photograph of church history is plagued, as it is today, with many people trying to tell others about Jesus, and very few being witnesses of, and for, Jesus. The difference in our barbecue allegory is that those who try to witness attend the event. Those who are a witness are the event. Those who do their best to witness have a party, those who are the witness are the sweet smelling aroma. They sacrificed at least a portion of themselves and received something far greater in return. The sense of smell, not the hearing of the music, beckons to one and all that this is the place where true abundant life dwells.

If church wasn't of God, it would not have so many martyrs. If Old Testament sacrifices were a sweet smelling sacrifice to God, how much so, the martyrs who were burned at the stake for their beliefs. Today, Islamic bombers, seek to be martyred to gain a reward in heaven. Historically, Christian martyrs have already received their eternal heavenly reward here on earth.

Contemporary Christian worship is virtually a synonym for music. You pretty much have to attend a worship conference to find out that worship is really supposed to be the reason for the music, not the end to itself. And even in a worship conference it is easy to lose the reason for the music, because of all the music stuff. We lose the big picture because we focus on the pixels, the pixels we can see and understand.

What about the eternal barbecue with Jesus and all His human friends, the ones that only His grace could save? The world today says, "I want to see a church, that has heavenly food that tastes as good as Loseanna ribs, crawdads, hushpuppies, and a family reunion." The church says, "Here's an ipod with the best 20,000 worship choruses of the last five years, you can listen to them any time you want."

From our pixelated state we look around and all we see is other pixels, most of the time not even very colorful pixels. And the photograph's we see of church history are all beat up, faded, and distorted, "How can anything good come out of that? It's all black and white and gray, I like colors, at least everywhere but in Seattle."

Well, you and all your color are hidden in that tattered past. With all its faults, the historic church was maintained by God at least well enough to save a wretch like you, or is it "like me." Modern evangelicalism states, "When God saves the last person into His church, then The Rapture will

happen.” To that I might add, “That must happen soon, because we are becoming so subject to entropy, that baring some other miracle, we will soon be too stupid to understand God’s grace at all.”

This week we have only mentioned two dark times in church history, the Crusades and the Inquisition. Next week, we will begin to take a look at some of other church events and times, somewhat in the context of the impending Rapture. Now let us back up from those periods of carnage and see if we can catch a glimpse of God’s photograph.

The Crusades were really religious wars to free the Holy Land from the rule of Islamic oppressors. Islam had conquered much of the old Roman Empire and it was the Crusaders goal to free a portion of the conquered land for the cause of Christianity. In the process not only were many of the Infidel Moslems killed, but also, many Jews and Orthodox Christians. How horrible, at least in the eyes of our view of history.

The Inquisition comes on the other side of that Islamic threat. This time, using Islamic conversion techniques, non Christians in Spain were encouraged to convert to Christianity, or to face martyrdom for their Islamic or Jewish faith. “Happy Easter brethren. Please pass the ham.”

What we need to see is that these events picture, beyond my pixel view, the grace to allow me to write these weekly words in English, to eat ham any day of the year if I choose, and not to have to write in Arabic with the threat of death hanging over my head. Lest we forget, it was basically the Christian church with all its faults who stopped this Islamic invasion of the western world. This in turn allowed for the development of Western Civilization with all its freedoms of expression. Since 9-11 we see that this war continues today. It is only our distorted pixel view of history that says it had ceased.

We live in a sinful world, and in much of what the church calls the 10-40 window, the reality of those threats in the preceding paragraph are a daily truth for a Christian. The chance of being a martyr for Jesus Christ is not something you read about in a book, it is a reality of life.

Someone once told me, “The validity of The Rapture is only important to those who have something to lose. It’s a way out without suffering for Christ.” Since, The Rapture as we know it, is really a creation of the English speaking Industrial Age, and predominately a British and American theology, in the big picture there must be some truth to this statement. The picture that this series of Fractured Rapture Tales seeks to see, is if this “pie in the sky” has something going for it beyond pixel escapism. Stay tuned for our next installment.

Seeds for Prayer

My trip to look at the farm in Eastern Washington went quite well. Though we have just started, it looks very promising and has great potential. I am preparing an article, or proposal, or something to describe what I would like to see developed on the property. This will be submitted along with an offer on the property. That should be available by next week. Please intercede for the grace to proceed in developing this opportunity.