

# How Are They To Believe?

by John Emery

**For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” Romans 10:12-15**

At the end of a spiritual retreat I attended some years ago, the participants were asked to share the most significant insights they had gained over the course of the weekend. One woman’s reflection has stayed with me ever since. During the retreat there had been a banquet symbolizing the heavenly feast to which we are all invited when Jesus calls us to Himself. She said, “I could see myself in heaven with Jesus looking around and noticing all the people who weren’t there because I didn’t tell them.”

As He journeyed to the cross, Jesus must have reflected many times on the fragility of God’s plan for our salvation. He knew that He could and would fulfill His end of the bargain, but He also knew that much depended on His all too human followers to stay the course and share the message whatever the cost to themselves. Scripture records how well the apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, justified Jesus’ confidence in them. But they along with every generation of believers, must have wondered whether those coming after them would stay the course and share the message. Whoever it was who first shared the message with you and nurtured your faith, whether it was a parent grandparent, family member, or friend, did so because someone had once done it for them and because they wanted you to be at that feast someday. They, too, must have wondered whether the seeds they planted would take root and bear fruit.

Now is our time, although the challenges and barriers that confront us are different than those of early believers. Persecution, imprisonment and martyrdom are not concerns for most of us, although they still are for many Christians around the world. They have been replaced by other obstacles like complacency, abundance and busy-ness – thieves that can steal our passion to “go, make disciples,” as Jesus commanded. We, too, can wonder whether future generations will carry on after us, but, as with our ancestors, we cannot guarantee it. All we can do, and must do, is stay the course and share the message, trusting that through us the Spirit will carry the mission one generation further.

This week, take some time to think about someone you know who might not be there at the heavenly feast because you didn’t tell them – and then tell them. God will help the seeds we plant grow, but first we have to plant them. Christ is counting on you.

***Dear God, I thank You for those people who shared the good news of Jesus with me! Help me to find those in my daily life with whom I in turn can share the message. It is not always easy. But I know it is what You want me to do. And I also do believe that You will empower me to do the things You ask me to. Give me a chance today to do just that! In Jesus' name, AMEN.***