

Who Saved Who?

Norman Borlaug died last night in Dallas, Texas (September 12, 2009). I saw the notice of his death on the CNN website this morning when I arrived at the office. It's so ironic to me that we're still reading about Michael Jackson's death two and a half months later, but the headlines about Norman will probably be long gone by tomorrow. Michael was a pop music sensation, but Norman literally saved the lives of two billion people.

Norman Borlaug was one of only five people to have won the Nobel Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. When he died at 95 yesterday, he had been awarded more than fifty honorary doctorates from institutions in eighteen countries. He spent much of his life working at an agricultural research station in Mexico, where he hybridized corn and wheat for arid climates. Mexico, Pakistan and India were particularly impacted by his work, as well as many African countries. He is credited with doubling the world's wheat production between 1960 and 1980, thus saving two billion people.

But it wasn't Norman Borlaug who saved the two billion people! It was Henry Wallace, the first Vice President of the United States under Franklin D. Roosevelt. His own party didn't really like him, and he only occupied the office at Roosevelt's insistence. Later on, he would be replaced by Harry S. Truman as Vice President when Roosevelt ran again. Time magazine even today ranks him as #11 out of 15 in the list of America's Worst Vice Presidents.

But Henry Wallace was a former Secretary of Agriculture, so he was instrumental in inking a deal with the government of Mexico and establishing an agricultural research station whose sole purpose was to hybridize corn and wheat for arid climates. And it was Wallace who hired a young man named Norman Borlaug to work there. So Henry Wallace should get the credit for saving two billion people.

Except it wasn't Henry Wallace – it was George Washington Carver. While this young African American man was a student at Iowa State University, he had a Dairy Sciences professor who allowed his six-year-old little boy to go on botanical expeditions on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. And George Washington Carver took that little boy and put a love in him for plants and what they could do for humanity. And so, it was he who shaped little Henry Wallace and pointed his life in a certain direction long before he ever grew up to become the Vice President of the United States. So George Washington Carver should get the credit for saving two billion people.

Except it wasn't George Washington Carver. Back in the 1800s there was a farmer in Diamond, Missouri named Moses. He and his wife Susan lived in a slave state but they didn't believe in slavery. This was a major problem, because a group named the Quantros Raiders would ride through the state to kill people and burn buildings belonging to those who opposed slavery. And one night in early January, the raiders burned their barn, shot some people, and captured some others – including a young woman named Mary Washington who refused to let go of her infant baby George.

Mary Washington was Susan's best friend and she was distraught, so Moses sent word out through the neighbors and finally after two days was able to set up a meeting with an offshoot group of Quantros Raiders. He took his only horse and traveled four hours north to a crossroads in Kansas to meet four Quantros Raiders in the middle of the night. They had burlap sacks tied over their heads with cutout eyeholes. And Moses traded his only horse for what they threw him in a bag – a cold, almost dead African American infant named George Washington. He placed that little baby under his coat next to his skin and walked him home, talking to him all the way, promising that he would raise him as his own, and educate him, and give him his last name – Carver – in honor of his dead mother

That is how Moses and Susan Carver came to raise that little baby George Washington Carver. And so it was Moses and Susan Carver who really saved the lives of two billion people. Unless ... (we could do this all day!) ...

Joshua 2:1 And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot's house, named Rahab, and lodged there.

Joshua 2:15 Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall.

Joshua 2:18 Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee.

Joshua 6:25 And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.

Jericho:

- cursed city, only six acres in size
- 6' outer wall, 12' space, 12' inner wall, walls 30' high
- houses built across walls because of increasing population

Scarlet Cord:

- simplicity of the plan
- no other way to be recognized by God
- the cord was a noticeable mark to others
- the cord silenced every fear
- it was either the scarlet cord or the scarlet mark of sin
- the "embarrassment" of the scarlet cord
- Rahab didn't know when spies would return, kept cord in the window
- the spies had escaped by the cord – its strength was sufficient

BLOODLINE IN SCRIPTURE / TESTIMONY OF APOSTLES

1 John 1:7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

1 Peter 1:18-19 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; ¹⁹ But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Ephesians 2:12-13 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

BUT REALLY, WHO SAVED WHO? Did the spies save Rahab, or did Rahab save the spies? They saved her once, but she saved them twice!

Matthew 1:5 And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;

It was unusual for women to be named in genealogies, but Matthew names five: Tamar was a Canaanite woman who posed as a prostitute to seduce Judah, Rahab was a Gentile and a prostitute, Ruth was a Moabite woman whose offspring were forbidden to enter the assembly of the Lord for ten generations, Bathsheba committed adultery with King David, and Mary bore the stigma of pregnancy outside of wedlock. Five object lessons about the power of grace!

Hebrews 11:31 By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

Rahab is the last “object lesson” named specifically in Hebrews 11.

When you invest in souls, when our church invests in souls, really ... **who is saving who?** You never know who you're witnessing to, who you're praying with, who you're teaching or discipling, who you're encouraging. **They may end up being the future of this church!**

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20 For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.

Why is one soul so important? Read the book of Acts!

- In Acts 3 it was one lame man at the Temple Gate
- In Acts 8 it was one anonymous Ethiopian Treasurer
- In Acts 9 it was one Pharisee named Saul
- In Acts 9 it was one coat-maker named Dorcas
- In Acts 10 it was one Roman Centurion named Cornelius
- In Acts 14 it was one anonymous crippled man
- In Acts 16 it was one seller of cloth named Lydia
- In Acts 16 it was one anonymous Philippian jailer
- In Acts 18 it was one ruler of the synagogue named Crispus
- In Acts 18 it was one eloquent preacher named Apollos

You never know just who you might be witnessing to!