

Getting People to Jesus

Last August in a New Jersey music hall as the punk band Bouncing Souls roared their way through a particularly raucous composition called "Lean on Sheena," some brawny fans near the back of the venue hoisted their wheelchair-bound pal onto their shoulders and launched him on a crowd-surf breaker that ultimately deposited him on the stage at the feet of one of the musicians. Bassist Bryan Kienlen didn't summon security; instead he roared, "That's Jersey right there for you!"

(http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/22/arts/music/22souls.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss&pagewanted=print)

Two millennia ago a punk rabbi without formal training began bouncing souls in the low-rent district of Galilee. His neighborhood concerts packed the row house he occupied as rowdy crowds spilled into the surrounding streets. Four husky late-comers arrived intent on putting their paralyzed pal in touch with this rising healer but found even SRO was eighty-sixed. With no backstage passes, they bypassed the bouncer, cut down the alley and scrambled to the top deck where they literally raised the roof just above center stage. In the first recorded instance of crowd surfing they rappelled their homey right to the front man's feet. He didn't summon a flexing fisherman to toss the offender and dun the crew for damages. Instead he grinned and bellowed, "That's Kingdom right there for you!"

All right, so maybe I've pushed the details to make a point but some important parallels in these stories strike home. True, the paraplegic concert-goer remained in his chair and, after all, the big point of the story in Mark 2.1-12 is that Jesus made the man walk. Or is it? Well, the narrative hints that spiritual healing really matters more here than physical restoration, so of course that's the central focus. Both good points, but neither of those things comes first in the story.

The immediate image when the man's bed hits the floor is Jesus' reaction: the scenario pleases him. And remember whose roof now has an impromptu skylight. Maybe Peter's, per Mark 1.29, but Matthew 4.13 says Jesus had shifted his headquarters to this very town. The phrase "at home" in v.1 accurately reflects a Greek construction that differs from "the house" in 1.29. In other words, these boys just busted a hole in Jesus' crib! That's vandalism in any commonwealth you care to name, but in the Kingdom of Heaven it is commendable audacity.

Those men in New Jersey saw a packed house as a vehicle, not an obstacle. The four friends in Mark 1 looked for openings, not obstructions. As the scribes discover by the end of this story, the Christ-concert of salvation cares more about daring than decorum and values brazenness over breeding. Let's bust barriers to bring people to a Lord who, by whatever route and at whatever cost, will always be glad to see them.

Rock 'n' Roll!

Doug