

# THE WEIGHT OF A NAME

Rev. Rod Barks

Sometimes a name can be a difficult cross to bear. Members of the Gen 2 Global Peace Initiative certainly testify of such.

“The group is made up of activists who are the children or grandchildren of peacemakers and human rights leaders. The Toronto meeting (in August) included Martin Luther King 3, Dalia Rabin-Pelosoff, daughter of the assassinated Israeli PM Yitzhak Rabin...Tushar Gandhi, the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi and Montreal MP Justin Trudeau.” (Maclean’s Aug. 17, ’09)

Trudeau points out “his name can be a blessing and challenge...we are all working with the legacies our ancestors left us...these are people who have worked hard to live up to the responsibility of the names they have been given.”

I hear you loud and clear, Justin. So much so I am somewhat surprised at the lack of invitation to your Gen 2 gathering.

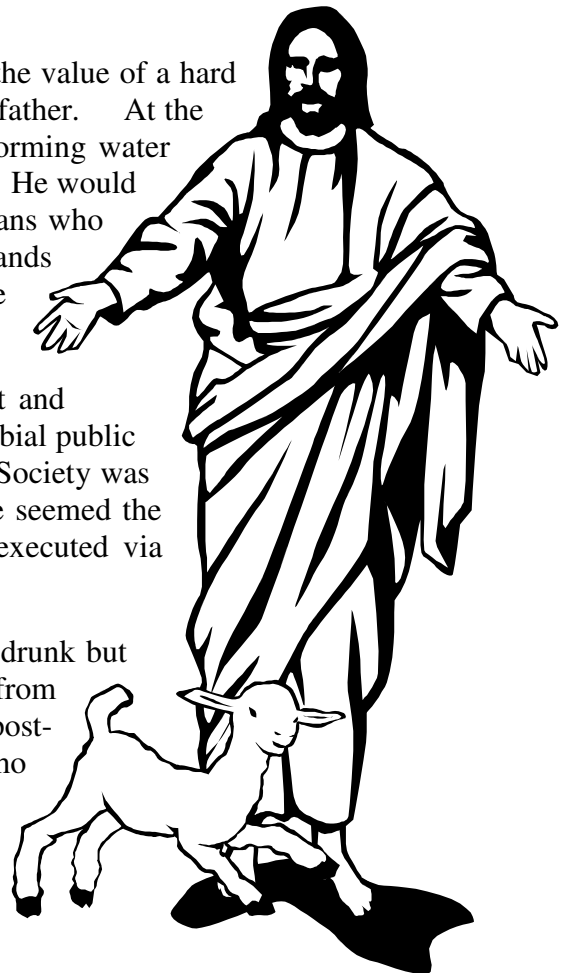
You see, in proclaiming to be a Jesus-follower I align myself with a spiritual ancestor of astounding and enduring influence. Human accomplishments are impressive, but pale in comparison to the Messiah whose Name I bear.

Born on Earth to working class, blue-collar parents He learned the value of a hard days labor under the watchful eye of Joseph; carpenter and step-father. At the age of 30 he reluctantly entered the public spotlight by transforming water into wine so the wedding party he was attending could continue. He would never return to the shadows as elated wedding guests became fans who spread the word, causing his influence to swell. Tens of thousands flocked to hear his public speeches and gaze in amazement as he transformed lives through power-packed words and actions.

Blind eyes blinked open, completely restored. The lame leapt and crooked politicians were transformed, retreating from the proverbial public trough, becoming benevolent influencers seemingly overnight. Society was shaken and the elite were threatened. Eradicating his influence seemed the only sane action and death was conveniently arranged, then executed via crucifixion on a cross.

But three days later, the unimaginable occurred. Like a punch-drunk but resilient Rocky Balboa, Jesus refused to stay down and arose from the dead. Thousands saw and interacted with Him in this post-resurrection state. His popularity ratings skyrocketed; who wouldn’t want to hang with such a phenomena.

As the years rolled by the thousands of followers mushroomed to tens of thousands, then millions and now billions; all



connected to the Name, all linked to the legacy of the original Great One. This is my spiritual heritage.

But being a Jesus-follower today is not for the faint of heart. A growing number of Canadians testify of “no religious affiliation”, which has ramifications for those who retain their link to the Savior. Risk of being labeled narrow minded and bigoted has ballooned from possible to probable in recent years. The crime: having firm convictions regarding right and wrong, truth and falsehood. In an age of relativism, Jesus’ claim to be “the way, the truth and the life” is a difficult pill to swallow. Many reject both the medicine and all who partake of it.

Others dismiss a name-bearer because they despise the original ancestor. Millions of Canadians view Justin Trudeau through the upraised middle finger of his father, Pierre -- commonly called the Trudeau salute. Likewise, Tushar Gandhi is evaluated through the lens of Grandpa Gandhi. When Martin Luther King 3 speaks publicly, guess who he is compared to?

Sometimes Christ-followers likewise sense an icy reception, not because they are personally known, but because their Savior is known -- and disliked. Each time such a person is held at arms-length, an opportunity to glean from their perspective and life experience is squandered. Such relational constipation will always produce societal discomfort.

The name we bear is ever a mixture of privilege and responsibility. I am acutely aware of the honor of being a Jesus-follower; the joy, peace and relationship with God that result. Yet I am equally aware that people evaluate my Savior based upon the way I carry myself as His follower. That can be difficult for one such as I whose flaws are so evident.

Thankfully, God has equipped me with three tools to combat this conundrum: prayer to live well, repentance when I don’t, and a wife who gently observes when one of the first two is sorely lacking.

St. Paul boldly described Jesus’ name as the “...name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Such a ringing endorsement of the person of Jesus is surely sufficient qualification for membership in the esteemed Gen 2 Global Peace Initiative. I think my personal contributions could be beneficial to fellow name-bearers of all persuasions, starting with the arrangement of a future meeting place. After all, “In my Father’s House are many rooms...”

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