



Precursors to Revival
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Lenten Message
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God's blessings as we enter into this season of Lent in the Dakotas Conference. I'm Roger Spahr, co – district superintendent of the Eastern Sunrise District and Pastor at Cornerstone/Encounter Churches in Watertown. If you're planning on reading along in Adam Hamilton's book on "Revival" during this Lenten season, you will see that the first chapter speaks to the Precursors to the Wesleyan Revival. God in a historical vacuum did not use John and Charles Wesley. God had been working long before they were born in the movements of the Puritans and the Church of England. England had gone through much turmoil because of religion. Henry the VIII broke from the Catholic Church so he could get a divorce (Which isn't the most noble reason for starting a new denomination), but after years of division and bloodshed, many people were getting tired of religion altogether.

Spirituality was on the decline and social problems were rampant.

It was in that environment that John and Charles Wesley were born.

They were raised with believing parents who shaped their lives by example and by prayer. John Wesley was raised with a sense in his bones that he was alive for a purpose. John was a preacher's kid, and as a child the Parsonage that he was growing up in was set on fire, most likely intentionally by an upset parishioner in his father's congregation. (I believe some of you pastors may have descendants of that parishioner in your congregations today).

As the house was burning the family realized that John wasn't outside with the rest of the family, and as his parents knelt in prayer thinking he was dead and committing him to God, suddenly little John appeared in the upstairs window. Neighbors got on each other's shoulders and rescued him just as the roof collapsed. His parents saw God's hand in that last second rescue, and John was given an identity that day. He was a: "A Brand plucked from the Burning". He lived the rest of his life with this deep sense that he was spared by God for some divine purpose on this earth. It began his life long search for God's call and lead him one day to Aldersgate and a "HEART WARMING" experience which lead to spiritual movement that would transform England and America.

If I could give every person in the Dakotas just one gift this Lenten season, it would be a gift of having that kind of identity in Christ. This sense that you were created for a divine purpose that only you can fulfill. It is one of the precursors of revival. It is the sense of Esther as she is told by her Uncle:

"And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" Esther 4:14 (NIV)

Most of us will never have a royal position to work from. Some of you listening may not have had Godly parents like the Wesley's. Maybe your parents told you that you were an accident (a whoops baby) but the truth is that you were no accident to God. Your earthly parents may not have planned your life on, but God planned you from the beginning of time and brought you into this world for such a time as this!

Let me share with you a rescue story that happened in Watertown in one person's. A hospice nurse who works with my wife came back to the office from her rounds. She had just visited a patient who was dying of cancer. She was an old retired nurse who was in the last days of her life. The hospice nurse walked into this woman's home and said: "You may not remember who I am, but I will never forget who you are. My mother told me that you saved my life when I was born. I was born with a blood problem that wasn't recognized until the delivery. The situation seemed hopeless and I was turning blue without oxygen when you heard what was going on, you came running into the delivery room and said, "She needs new blood...take mine." And you rolled up your sleeve and they started a blood transfusion directly from your arm into my body. If you hadn't been there that day, I would not be alive. So I want to thank you... and I believe it's no accident that I am able to be your nurse at the other end of life."

If you are a follower of Christ, you had someone give their blood to give your life. You have a Savior who rolled up his sleeves and rescued you from death. Do you think God would have done that if God didn't have some purpose in mind for your life?

I find that pretty hard to believe.

We are living in some exciting times from a Spiritual perspective. I believe there is a new revival brewing around the world. The only question is, "What is my part in it?" I would like to pray with you as we begin this Lenten journey together. The world needs Jesus desperately, may the world see Jesus in you! Would you make this prayer your own as I pray it?

Lord, we need revival, and let it begin in me right here in this out of the way place of the world called the Dakotas. . Let me find my significance and my identity in you. Let me find my purpose for which you shed your blood for me. Give me the boldness of a John Wesley to fulfill the calling you have on my life. In Christ's name I pray. Amen

