

“A broken hallelujah”

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In the preparations for one of my classes, I read a recent book on Mother Teresa . : Come, be my light (2008). Most of us know of her, who did so much good to the poorest of the poor, who created a home for those dying on the streets in Calcutta and who challenged us to find our Calcutta to serve people in need. Her letters and notes and also many talks revealed that she did it all for Jesus Christ. Moreover she did it even though she felt darkness and loneliness. I was deeply moved by this book, I could only read it in small portions. While she was doing all these good deeds her spiritual pain was heavy. It was when she was at the side of the poorest of the poor, that she felt closest to Jesus.

My life is very far from hers. But I feel comforted about her being able to serve people so greatly even when her soul was in sorrow, even when she often felt God to be far away. He was still right there.

We can be Christ's outreached arms and feet bringing words and deeds of hope, even when we feel empty, even if we feel as if God is far away. Perhaps we harbor a view that a Christian always lives life with assurance, peace and joy. My point is that we may also feel a lot of sorrow and pain, because of the state of the art in this world, because of others, because of ourselves. We may feel this mix of seeming contradictions: joy and sadness, peace and anguish, worries and assurance, hope and fear, as we live our daily lives in a local and global community. This is part of being “travelers” or pilgrims with citizenship in the kingdom of God.

What kind of people do you like to be around? Those who are always sure about everything, those who are always happy, confident, busy... I feel more at ease with people in whom I see some kind of “brokenness”, some signs that show that we share something deeply human: “I am not perfect, I am in the process of being formed by the hands of God and of fellow sisters and brothers”.

I am very fond of book titles, definitions or quotes that in a few words convey an important message. For example, since my youth I have like Bonhoeffer's definition on grace, the cheap versus the costly grace, reminding me of the importance to not diminish the gospel to make it “sell” easier. The last couple of years it is a (Swedish) book title that keep on reminding me of something important. “A broken hallelujah” (Sjodin 2008) which tells about a brokenness in the sense of “openness” or as he (in a speech) quotes Leonard Cohen: “There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in”. The book tells in a variety of ways of this brokenness, that we are earthen vessels, and that the warm light, love and truth from God needs our brokenness (rather than perfectness) to get communicated to others; emptiness rather than fullness is required of a vessel.

So, my prayer is that we as a KGU community dare to bear witness of a “broken hallelujah” which overflows of God's love, truth and precious grace. “Faith leaks” a student reminded me the other day. May we leak faith...through the cracks, through our brokenness, so that the light from God may get in, and may get out...

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