

The Least of these.

An appeal to our churches, for the homeless in Atlanta.

The Crisis. The homeless in the streets, during deadly weather in Atlanta:

It was January 23rd, 2016. That evening, the temperature dropped to 27°. I was home, in the warmth and comfort of my 7 bedroom home, in the comfort of my four walls with a burning fire and the central heating turned up to 76° that night. It was a winter night in Atlanta, one that I'd seen many times before, in my 15 years of tenancy in Georgia. And I wasn't going to be cold, I wasn't going to be hungry, I wasn't going to be uncomfortable that night.

With the impending weather, I pulled out several old comfy heavy sweaters, socks and thermal underwear. That I'd stored away all summer. I wasn't going to be cold this night, and I wasn't going to be uncomfortable. And as I did, I was reminded of my social media postings, of myself being in a polo shirt, and shorts while twitting my thumbs and practicing my swing in the back yard, with one of my favorite drivers that I liked to pose with, in December, in Atlanta. "That's why we live in Georgia". I taunted to my followers and friends.

Although we'd had some warning about the forthcoming cold snap, I tried to make some basic preparations, such as picking up extra drinking water. That was about as much preparation that I was going to make, I had done my part. I felt that I'd done what I needed to, to prepare for the imminent brutal weather soon to hit Atlanta. I felt the only thing I was missing was my babies, close to me. During this imposed separation. But I knew I had trained them well, and I knew they loved me, dearly. And I knew that the Lord was on my side, and I knew he had already worked the situation out. I knew that my children had many resources, and that acknowledgement would help to comfort me this night, as it had many others before. I hadn't seen my children, in six months. I would stop to think of how I'd take my children to stores, in one of my choices of three Mercedes Benzes, to buy whatever they wanted.

But, "I knew I could ask for anything, in his name and see it manifested, in 7 Days". So I would continue to wait, and remain faithful to him, during this imposed and painful separation. I'd also spoken to my cousins in Chicago, earlier that day, and learned that the temperature in Chicago was -7°. I cringed at that news, but I knew my family would manage okay, them in their lake shore drive and Hyde Park villas.

But I was comfortable, warm and dry this Saturday evening in Atlanta. And my belly was full, and I'd just topped off two hot totties, in front of a crackling, golden and orange fire. In my big comfy leather chair, on my Man cave. Equipped with my soul mate, for my contentment and joy. And so there I was giving GOD thanks and praise with my mouth for all the many material blessings that I had to enjoy, and as I glared into the embers before me, I contemplated what I would wear to church the next morning to the Sunday morning worship. And then I thought of all those church pews, in my particular place of worship.

There must at least 500, in the lower sanctuary alone. Myself and other parishioners would often joke about we owned a pew. We would joke about owning a piece of real estate, in GOD's house.

Just then, a thought came to me, and suddenly, I began to imagine what it would feel like to be homeless this night, on this frigid night, without shelter. I contemplated this for a while, as considered the amount of church pews in my church, while I gazed into the beautiful embers, and enjoyed the warmth of the fire. I incinerated two bundles of wood that evening, while contemplating what it would be like to be out in the elements, on this night in Atlanta, at 27°.

And then I remembered where I'd grown up, the great lakes. I remembered how I always has somewhere to go, home. To escape the blistering deadly tundra, or the windy city. Then I considered some of the places that I'd been stationed, "Greenland. Frigid, and I always had a place to retreat. But then I considered the frost bite that I'd been fortunate and blessed to have avoided, as well as the gangs that I'd been able to avoid. It was all his mercy and his grace, I realized. And in that moment, I considered that the place that I would be in worship at in the morning, would have it's doors closed tonight, during the coldest night of winter.

I considered how tomorrow I would sit on a pew to hear a good gospel message, about the love of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who I remembered at that moment was said to have been born in a manger. I considered how I would be in the warmth and comfort of the beautiful sanctuary that was known globally, for its humanitarian and civil rights efforts. And I considered how those international visitors would be occupying those warm pews, learning of how my people overcame many injustices, and exclusion, through practicing charity and brotherly love.

Then I considered how I would be arriving to church, which would be in a late model German engineered automobile. I would also be choosing between a varied array of designer suits, shoes, shirts and ties and handkerchiefs. I remembered what it felt like to sit I church at my previous fellowship, next to a wife that hated me. And that I'd usually fight with, as soon as we got into the car afterwards. I remembered how hypocritical I'd feel, after leaving worship service in my Boss suits, and arguing with my wife, in front of my beloved innocent children. My foolish pride and vanity, the enemies of peace and humility, but GOD was going to show me, he was going to allow to go into a valley, later.

But now today, I sat in front of my fireplace on the coldest night in Atlanta, contemplating what I would wear tomorrow, to my beautiful warm church, while many could die from exposure tonight. Then I considered the frost bite again, and hypothermia, and the many ailments that those who have been exposed to the elements, would be susceptible to.

And then another thought passed my mind, "What if the church doors where open to the homeless, when the weather is extreme? This contemplation seemed to simple, but it was worth exploring I

thought I sat in front of the fire. What if the churches were open to the homeless when the weather was life threatening. Why don't we open the doors of the mega churches, to the homeless, during times of deadly weather?

The Opportunity to witness to the homeless after a having provided a warm escape from the elements. "That is church, the spirit said to me. Perhaps even deter those that would perpetrate crime that night, just to have a place to go for the night, just to escape the brutally cruel weather in Atlanta, when it is so life threatening. How difficult would it be to open the doors of the churches to the homeless, when the weather is life threatening?

The least of these.

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