

## Revenge Never Tasted So Good

July 15, 2008

Eating while you travel can at times be adventurous. Your sleep may even be disrupted by what you eat (for various reasons) or, in our case, what you are about to eat. In my case, along with my two roommates Bryan and Pat, we were kept up beginning at 3:00 AM by a rooster who had been placed 20 feet from our dorm room. This rooster, destined for dinner that night, was not about to go down without a fuss. Needless to say, it was with great satisfaction that I gazed into the pot of fresh chicken for dinner that evening and chewed a little slower than usual, savoring the taste of revenge.

Wouldn't it be nice if revenge always tasted so good? Wouldn't it be nice if the energy we put toward anger, malice, envy, and revenge would actually have a reward behind it we could feel good about? Or maybe not. Kenya just experienced the "fruit" of envy and revenge, and was it ever a rotten taste. After disputed elections in late December, the country was thrown into two months of chaos as "protestors" took to the streets pillaging, looting, murdering (over 1,000 dead), and burning. Hundreds of thousands were displaced, some of whom we met while doing our ministry. Many felt that the post-election violence was a result of years of pent up hostility and envy between various tribes/ethnic groups, and the election triggered this desire for vengeance from the groups. An entire nation suffered greatly and many communities are still rebuilding what was destroyed, not to mention the thousands and thousands of lives and families that must create a new life in an economy that is incredibly difficult to do so.

Revenge really doesn't taste very good, does it? We may dream it does, but that dreaming is a poison in our own souls that destroys our ability to forgive, to love, to experience joy, and to have peace in our life. I have no doubt that someone has hurt you in the past. Some reading this may even have experienced horrors and atrocities that cause most of us to shudder when we think of them. I am so sorry you had to experience that. But let me assure you that revenge is not the answer. Holding on to that anger and malice is not going to restore your soul and bring back peace and joy to your life. Only forgiveness can do that. Impossible? Many think that.

If anyone had reason to not be forgiving, it would have been Jesus of Nazareth. He was always helping, always caring, taught the greatest and most moral teaching this world has ever known, and loved more deeply than anyone ever has. Yet he was betrayed, brutally tortured, and executed in the most shameful, painful way humans had devised up to that point in history. His last words? "Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing." Incredible.

I know it is difficult, but may the Holy Spirit give you the strength to say, as Jesus did, "Father/Lord, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing." Only then will the poison of revenge, malice, and hate be lifted from your soul. Only then will it be able to be replaced with the joy, hope, and peace that only God can bring. A slogan arose in Kenya after the post-election violence: "Peace begins with me." Peace will begin when you learn to forgive and leave these things in God's hands.

Peace to you.

Pastor Dan