

A PREZ RELEASE

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Richard J. Daley, St. Patrick's Day and the Power of Pentecost

Growing up in Chicago in the 1950's included a political reality whose name was Richard J. Daley. The iron-fisted Irish mayor embodied the term "political machine." Every March, Chicago turned green in honor of St. Patrick's Day and even the infamously dirty Chicago River turned bright green for the big celebration. **Being Irish in Chicago was a source of pride. None of this Kermit the Frog, "It's not easy being green" stuff; to be Irish was a badge of honor.**

I remember my fourth grade teacher, Miss Brennan. She was an immigrant from Ireland and had every one of us in her class believing in leprechauns. "*Darby O'Gill and the Little People*" **was not merely a Disney film to Miss Brennan – "the little people" lived in our classroom and she would talk to them on a regular basis.** Sort of scary now that I think of it!!!

Any holiday in honor of a saint was an enigma to me. **Pentecostal preacher's kids don't get a lot of training on saints; in fact, the whole idea of saints was usually called pagan.** So I grew up with a very limited understanding of St. Patrick, but made sure I wore green on the big day because serious damage could be done to any fourth grader not wearing green in honor of Miss Brennan's patron saint.

The fact is, St. Patrick was a missionary whose fervor to evangelize the lost rivaled the Apostle Paul, William Carey, J. Hudson Taylor or any missionary hero you can think of. He was actually Welsh, (born about 400 AD) and was kidnapped at age 16 and sold as a slave to Irish owners. It was while in Ireland as a slave that he had a sovereign encounter with God. Following a series of miracles observed by countless people, an angel spoke to him in a dream and led him to return to Britain. He was mentored by Bishop Germanus in what is now Auximierre, France. He subsequently received a call similar to Paul's Macedonia call recorded in Acts 16. This missionary call was to return to Ireland, the land where he had been enslaved to preach to "the sons and daughters of the forest of Foclut. His initial missionary journey into Ireland was done in clear defiance of the Irish king at Tara and all his druid advisors. If only half of what is reported to have occurred is true it was a power encounter that would make even Elijah and the contest with the prophets of Baal, pale in comparison. *I am struck by Patrick's boldness as he confronts the king and his druids and said, "unless you believe now, you will die at once, for*

God's wrath will come down upon your head." Patrick's entire ministry in Ireland was marked by the miraculous and regular power encounters with demonic forces.

When it comes to worldwide evangelism I believe that language acquisition, cultural awareness, strategic planning and technology are all necessary components. But a story like Patrick's reminds me of another element that is indispensable. **People who have experienced tragedy in their lives need not live life as victims, but can actually be transformed into the very messengers God needs to confront the most aggressive of challenges to the cause of Jesus Christ.**

God still restores people not merely so they can be made whole, but to reshape them for His eternal purposes. And it's OK to confidently trust in God's power alone. . . to heal the sick. . . deliver from the demonic. . . and confront any other opposition that has already been defeated by Christ's atoning work (Col 2:15) The more "stuff" available to aid us in our work for God, the more we will be tempted to rely on the obvious, visible and contemporary to replace what only God can do in the process of divine transformation.

. . . **In the face of militant world religion as aggressive as any Christian evangelistic effort**, we need to be inspired by Patrick's Spirit empowered boldness: remember it's all he had to rely on. . . **To undergird our efforts to reconcile hatred between human beings and ethnic groups** – we need to remember a slave whose name was Patrick that God transformed to evangelize the very people who had enslaved him.

. . . **When we become overly confident that our well-planned strategies will finally "close the gap"**, let's remember Patrick whose ministry was directed by God given dreams and angelic visits.

So to all the lads and lasses, Richard J and Miss Brennan – I finally understand why St. Patrick's Day is such a big deal! But when I wear the "green", it's not in honor of a patron saint, but a slave set free by the transforming power of a resurrected Lord whose sheer dependence on the Holy Spirit shook a nation for Christ!

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