

A Word from Mack

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Don't start the revolution without us

When our family lived in the panhandle of Texas, we had real winters. More often than not, a howling “norther” would blast down that flat chute of land called “the high plains,” and you would think that you were born in an ice cube with the air conditioner stuck on max. It was cold. How does 40-below wind chill sound to you? Cold.

It was in those winters, with ice on the roads sometimes as thick as six inches, that I learned what a “slow-motioned wreck” was all about. Driving as gingerly as possible, you could still lose control and start sliding. And you were helpless. If you were lucky, you just slid into the curb and messed up your wheel alignment.

But if you did not have that “good” fortune, then you were in for the terrible misadventure of sliding into parked cars, the dreaded territory of an intersection or, most awful of all, into the horror of on-coming traffic.

A “slow-motioned wreck” has a hair trigger. Boom. And in an instant reality has explosively snatched your fate from your own steering wheel and thrown you and your car onto the apathetic ice to settle your future. But after the trigger snaps, you have time. You watch as you slide. And there is nothing you can do about it. (Now please don't tell me about “turning your wheels into the direction of the slide” because on sheer ice the laws of motion are in control and the whole shebang is going, wheels turned or not.) It is really not “slow,” but because you can comprehend what is going on, you experience a “slow-motioned wreck.” You are in it. You just hope that it won't be too bad. It becomes hell if you have the kids in the car. I know you can see by now where I am going.

Yep. What we are living through, watching, aware of, feels like a “slow-motioned wreck” of all that we hold dear. Now, it's true, there might not be the wreck of a world out there that you and I honestly think there is. But if we really feel like it is, then the perception of a “slow-motioned wreck” has worked its way into the inside of us and commands our emotions which in turn commandeer our thoughts.

Sliding. Sliding. Sliding. What can stop the world's sliding? And the kids are here in the seat right next to us. A “norther” has struck our family life, our neighborhoods, our schools, and all of our old friendly familiar roads. Those old roads used to lead to broad uplands of pleasantness but have in a flash grown icily garish as the increasingly societal bedlam is now all competing and conspiring to be the deep freeze that spells doom. Can the sliding stop? I will answer with a firm and resolute: “Yes!”

Listen. Dr. Wilfred Grenfell in his famous William Belden Noble lectures at Harvard in 1911 said this: “The Great Causes of God are not stopped by being blown up, but by being sat upon! They are stopped by the glacier-like indifference of thousands of us nobodies unwilling to serve in their High Calling.”

The ice in our society’s ways is caused by the ice in our own hearts. Yours and mine. Frozen. Yet, I know that the “thaw” can come instantaneously. In a moment. In the twinkling of an eye. You and I can pull the “hair trigger” of resolve and decide to stop sitting on the Great Cause of Love and Caring. In a flash we can stand up. We can determine the condition of our world’s road by choosing the Warmth of the Love of God. It has happened before.

In 1776, 56 people stood up. They marched forward and signed a Declaration that melted the ice in themselves and in the world. The last 31 blow-torch words of that still red hot paper read: “And for the support of this declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other, our lives, our fortunes, and our sacred honor.” I have memorized those 31 words. Because they are precisely the formula that brings springtime in a flash to our lives and neighborhoods and cities. In our next newsletter I want to share how we can do this. Reaching up. Standing up. And lifting others up. No more ice!