

Summer Solstice and Solo Survival

Colleagues,

For the first time in my life I've been tracking the sun at sunrise as it moves north on our horizon toward this day when "the sun stands still," and then starts heading south along our northern hemisphere horizon. So I've been up and out of bed to see the sunrise (still possible for an old farm boy—this morning at 4:41 standard time) and marking its progression. Literally marking. But I do this in reverse, not by noting how much further north the sun moves along the eastern treeline, but with little strips of masking tape on a western wall in our home (with a window to the north) to show how much farther south that bright orange radiance has been moving each day. FYI it's moved 11 inches on that wall since I started taping on May 8.

After this morning it'll start moving back. Summer solstice.

But that means winter solstice for folks in most of South America, a third of Africa, all of Australia, Antarctica, and Papua New Guinea. Though in PNG, just a smidgin south of the equator, it doesn't make much difference. Sunrise, sunset, always around 6 o'clock. And that's a segue to this marvelous piece of narrative theology from PNG.

Anton Lutz, young law-promise theologian in Papua New Guinea—with "only" a B.A. in theology from Valparaiso University—is the son of long-term medical missionaries in that nation. Anton has contributed to the ThTh repertoire in the past. Just two years ago he posted an essay to us and we passed it on to you: "Legalism and the Gospel in Papua New Guinea." <<https://crossings.org/thursday/Thur051205.htm>>

I've never met Anton face-to-face, nor anyone of his family. But sometimes I'm blessed with messages that pass around the Lutz-loop. Like this one, part of a letter from Julie Lutz, Anton's mother, that came my way third hand. I wanted to pass it on to the ThTh listserve, but I didn't know her e-address. So I zapped an email to Anton in PNG. He responds saying that he's out-bush somewhere "among the Penale people" building an airstrip. He uses solar panels to generate juice so he can stay cyber-connected. He'll forwarded my request to his mom back at the clinic, wherever that is. Just minutes ago—whew!—I got her OK. For which I am thankful. Her story is just too good not to spread around. Way at the end below I'll pass on to you Julie's message to me.

Dear Family and Friends, Two weeks ago I had one of those flat-footed experiences. Our son Anton and I had gone to Mt Hagen with a PNG friend. We stopped for a quick pit-stop at the Highlander Hotel, and I scurried in right past the security guards. But Solo, our friend, was stopped cold. "Are you a guest here?" Everything about him – his well-worn clothes, his attempt at an unobtrusive entrance – made it obvious he wasn't. Solo was flustered and tried to mutter an explanation, but in the face of the guard, he could say nothing. No way would the guard let Solo pass. I stopped, not sure whether I should go or come, and then Anton strolled in. He quickly assessed the situation and said confidently to the guard, "He's with me. Is there a problem?" The guard adjusted his stance saying, "No, sir; no problem," and Solo and Anton walked in.

I would normally file the incident under "uncomfortable examples of white privilege" and move on, except for one thing. The scene shifted in my mind, and it occurred to me that this is what Jesus does for me and you. I might think I can waltz my way into God's heaven or if stopped, convince Him I'm worthy of His love, pointing to my relatively good conduct, right belief,

or fervent repentance. But truth be told, in the face of God, I have nothing, absolutely nothing, to say on my own behalf. My best self-recommendation sputters hopelessly, and so does yours. It's then that Jesus strides up, stands by me and says, "She's with me." And on we go. +++

Julie's proclamation should really be the finale for this week's posting.

But I can't resist. Solo and solstice. Solstice = the sun stops. "We stopped for a pit-stop." Solo was stopped, "stopped cold," Julie says. Solo and solstice. Stop, stop, stop. Aren't we all? White privilege—or moral privilege, money privilege, I.Q. privilege—notwithstanding. "Stopped cold," to mix a metaphor, by the searing heat of the divine spotlight. With nothing any longer "un-exposed"—when ALL the lights are turned on—we all look shabby, "flustered," can "say nothing." Not only before the divine examiner, but before our human companions as well.

And then the Aha! of another Son's stopping at the very spot where we're stopped cold: "She's with me. Is there any problem?" And the cosmic security guard says: "No, sir; no problem." Standing still, our standing still, alongside that Solstice-Son, our By-stander, generates the cosmic version of the Porgy and Bess libretto—no matter what the temperature, nor when the sun comes up. "She's with me, he's with me" so it's "Summer time. And the livin' is easy."

Peace and Joy!

Ed Schroeder

Greetings, Ed. If you still think you need permission, it is readily – and humbly – given. The incident was one of those 'ding' moments that I never thought was meant for me alone. Good additions in the Solstice Son!

Bel isi long Bikpela, ()*

Julie

[() I asked a PNG veteran to translate. "Bel isi long Bikpela" is "Peace in the Lord" in Melanesian Pidgin English.]*