



Red Cities

by Paul Olver, Latin America

A recent news item entitled “Red Cities” listed the 50 most murderous cities in the world – three in South Africa, four in the U.S., and the other 43 all in Latin America!

San Juan, Puerto Rico, made the list of the 50 most murderous cities, and Barrio Obrero is one of its worst neighborhoods. It is home to a vibrant Free Methodist Church – perhaps the fastest growing in Latin America – led by Pastor Mercedes Reynoso, who also serves as conference superintendent.

One Sunday she introduced a man newly released from jail where he had found Christ through the church’s radio program. He absolutely beamed when Pastora Mercedes presented him to the congregation as their new brother. Then she called a police officer to the front and had him face the congregation. He had accepted Christ the previous week. She said to the congregation, “This is your new brother.” She said to the officer, “This is your new family.” Everyone cheered.

There in front of the congregation the ex-con and the police officer eyed each other. Had their paths crossed before? They had each just been introduced as brothers in a new family. I don’t remember which one moved first, but they embraced each other as the congregation went wild with applause and tears.

The Old Commandment still stands today: Do not murder. Of course, Jesus added: Don’t even *think* about it! Whether it is blood on our hands or anger in our hearts, Jesus’ death and resurrection breaks the power of sin and guilt and His grace changes everything.

The Good News of Jesus has power to transform actual murderers and sweet-appearing people with murderous attitudes in their hearts. The Good News of Jesus has power to transform cities and cultures, as well. This is the hope for the “Red Cities” of Latin America and our world. This is what we need to share with others – nearby and far away.



Red Cities

by Paul Olver, Latin America

A recent news item entitled “Red Cities” listed the 50 most murderous cities in the world – three in South Africa, four in the U.S., and the other 43 all in Latin America!

San Juan, Puerto Rico, made the list of the 50 most murderous cities, and Barrio Obrero is one of its worst neighborhoods. It is home to a vibrant Free Methodist Church – perhaps the fastest growing in Latin America – led by Pastor Mercedes Reynoso, who also serves as conference superintendent.

One Sunday she introduced a man newly released from jail where he had found Christ through the church’s radio program. He absolutely beamed when Pastora Mercedes presented him to the congregation as their new brother. Then she called a police officer to the front and had him face the congregation. He had accepted Christ the previous week. She said to the congregation, “This is your new brother.” She said to the officer, “This is your new family.” Everyone cheered.

There in front of the congregation the ex-con and the police officer eyed each other. Had their paths crossed before? They had each just been introduced as brothers in a new family. I don’t remember which one moved first, but they embraced each other as the congregation went wild with applause and tears.

The Old Commandment still stands today: Do not murder. Of course, Jesus added: Don’t even *think* about it! Whether it is blood on our hands or anger in our hearts, Jesus’ death and resurrection breaks the power of sin and guilt and His grace changes everything.

The Good News of Jesus has power to transform actual murderers and sweet-appearing people with murderous attitudes in their hearts. The Good News of Jesus has power to transform cities and cultures, as well. This is the hope for the “Red Cities” of Latin America and our world. This is what we need to share with others – nearby and far away.