

Quelle Différence!

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

(1 Corinthians 1:18)

When we lived in France, we loved to drive 3-4 hours northwest of Paris and visit Normandy. It wasn't just the rolling hills and sandy beaches that attracted us; it was the memory of what happened during World War II. The Battle of Normandy began on June 6, 1944 when allied forces invaded Hitler's "fortress Europe." Along those 40 miles of beach, one can still see the Nazi fortifications and imagine the courage of those American, British and Canadian soldiers who came ashore. The American cemetery at Omaha Beach where over 9,000 soldiers are buried is a sober reminder of the cost involved in winning the battle that redefined the 20th century.

Not long after one of those trips to Normandy, we were sharing a meal with some of our French neighbors when the subject turned to vacations. Jean-Paul and Monique shared about their summer and then turned to us, "And what did you do for your vacation?" they asked. I was still in language school and my French was broken but I managed to explain that we had visited "the invasion beaches." "We've never heard of the invasion beaches," our French hosts responded. "Where are they?"

I was dumbfounded, appalled, disgusted! "These French!" I said to myself. "Is it possible they don't know? Don't they realize how many thousands of men gave their lives on the beaches of Normandy so that they could be freed from Nazi tyranny? C'est terrible!"

A few moments later, however, everything changed when I discovered the fault was mine not theirs. I simply hadn't yet learned the French name for those beaches! Jean-Paul knew all about *Jour-J* (D-Day) and was deeply grateful for what happened on that day. It was when I spoke of the "invasion" that he had become confused. "Mais non," he said. "We were not *invaded*! We were liberated! For the Nazis, yes, it was certainly an invasion. But for us, it was *une libération glorieuse*."

What a difference one's perspective makes. For the allies and their Nazi enemies, the Battle of Normandy was an invasion. But for the French, it was a day of liberation.

Now, look at another battlefield. Calvary is the place where God and Satan fought to determine the destiny of the world. What do you see when you contemplate the cross of Christ? An invasion? Do you feel threatened by Someone who comes to change your life and take over your world? Or do you see the cross as an act of liberation, setting you free from the forces of evil that have so long ravaged your soul? Your opinion of the cross will be determined by your allegiance.

At the cross, God established a beachhead. Though the war is far from over, we can be sure that the day is coming when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever (Revelation 11:15). Does this make you shout for joy or cringe in terror? It depends, of course, which side you are on.

Pastor Stan