



Love One Another

It's as Simple & As Difficult as That

May 10, 2015

Thought for the Week

Scriptures: Acts 10: 25-26, 34-3, 44-48 • 1 John 4: 7-10 • John 15:9-17

My sister was almost three years old when I joined the family; now there were two of us! It never occurred to me at the time, but it surely must have been a world-class task for my mother to show equal love and care for both of us. I can remember with a sense of shame and embarrassment, going through the independence phase of my young life, burdening my mother with my weekly angry tantrums; nonetheless, she never wavered in her efforts to show equal attention to both of us.

As I reflect on those long ago feelings, I believe that what was disturbing my developing sense of identity and importance was the fact that my big sister was taking up time that I thought I deserved. I got through it okay, but I am sure it must have worn on my mother's immense patience. She tried to be everything to everybody.

Perhaps what I am describing here is actually a natural human phenomenon: we want to belong; we want to have a place with the rest of the human family. It's no fun to stand on the sidelines and hope that someone will invite us into the "group," whatever forms that group may take. In short, belonging is a normal human instinct.

Imagine a few current examples: Peyton Manning, the star quarter back for the Indianapolis Colts for many seasons, was recently cut loose from the team for medical reasons. Was he despondent? Not at all. Within weeks, 3 other teams had wined and dined him and invited him to join them. He finally went to the Denver Broncos for a hundred million dollars over a five-year period.

On the other hand, the young college senior quarterback who dreams that he will be a first-round draft pick for some NFL team may end up not getting picked at all. Everyone has a desire to be recognized and find recognition. Some are winners, others are losers; hope springs eternal.

Now, after all that, we have two examples of inclusivity drawn right from the scriptures. The first comes from a story in the early Church. In the Acts of the Apostles we read that Peter, the apostle, is invited to the home of a Roman centurion, Cornelius. He immediately offers thanks to this gentile family for their hospitality and remarks that obviously God shows no partiality; all people of any cultural or religious background are acceptable in God's eyes.

Peter also sees this occasion as an example of the power of the Holy Spirit coming down upon an entire gentile family; he immediately suggests that all be baptized and become followers of Jesus Christ. In their great joy, they invited Peter to stay for some days and tell them more about the good news of Jesus Christ.

Today we might describe this entire event as an early example of the Witnessing. Peter's remarks could be called Christian Education, continued Christian teaching after baptism and welcome into the Church.

The incident we just described, of course, has its beginnings in the very words of Jesus as remembered by John the apostle:

“As the Father has loved me, so do I love you...(It) was not you who chose me; it was I who chose you to go out and bear fruit; the command I give you is this: love one another.”

If I were to transfer the meaning of these words to the times in which we live, I would suggest, for instance, that there is more reason now than at any time in history for us to strive and discover an ecumenical friendship among the major religions of the world. In many instances Christians today, for example, find little to admire in the religious faith of Moslem people. “9/11 is still too fresh in our consciousness. The same insensitivity often extends to people of other faiths as well.

Back for moment, therefore, to Peter, the Jew, in the home of the gentile Roman centurion: he felt no embarrassment or shame in being in such close touch with people his own religious tradition had for centuries disdained and called pagan.

In short and for the most part, people of any culture or religion are just good ordinary people. They may have different beliefs, different cultural practices, and different religious expressions but they long to belong, to be accepted as members of the family of God.

Perhaps then, after all this, we are left to reminisce over the story of Peter and his Roman (gentile friends). If God shows no partiality, what of us? If the Father of Jesus loves us without distinction, what of us? Every day we may need to start over and learn anew, like Peter did: everyone is okay in the mind and mystery of God

Prayer Thought for the Week

We give thanks to you, Lord God, and praise your works of peace. Help us be open to your presence in all creation as we seek to live in righteous relationship with one another, with our world, and you.

We confess to you our failings. In your compassion forgive our sins and lead us in your ways of peace.

We pray for this community, the nations of our world, and uphold the people of Sudan in our prayers. Grant wisdom and strength to all who work for just and peaceable communities for all people.

We pray for all people in their daily life and work. May all who are in need find the dignity of a job so they may provide for themselves and their families. May all recognize their responsibility in sharing Earth's plentiful resources.

In the name of the Prince of Peace we pray. Amen.

Stewardship Thoughts on Mothers Day

To be a new mom is to surrender. First your body, then your sleep. It's a sweet and chaotic surrender. To be a seasoned mom is also to surrender. First your fears, then—ever so slowly—your control. It's a terrifying and wonderful ride.

For minutes, days, months and years, you give. Hugs, a word of encouragement, a listening ear—when problems come, you are ready. You stand firm when strength is needed. You show grace over and over again. You exhaust yourself for the life of another. To be a mom is to surrender. First your pride, then your very heart.

Fortunately, motherhood doesn't require perfection. Your kids aren't longing for a clean home or a four-course meal. They're longing for *you*. All motherhood asks is that you show up. That's because you are enough.

So be you. Be a mom who's real—one who's not afraid to mess up or act a little silly. Follow your passions and share your interests with your kids. Be alone, spend time with friends, and laugh with your husband.

And when life gets a little crazy—because as a mom, you know it will—remember to surrender. As it says in 1 Peter 5:7, “Give all your worries to Him because He cares for you.”

Happy Mother's Day