



If I am to love
and follow Jesus,
I must know
Him.

Discipleship Comes First

World Hunger Emphasis

Luke 14:25-33

*And there went great multitudes with him:
and he turned, and said unto them,
If any man come to me, and hate not his father,
and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren,
and sisters, yea, and his own life also,
he cannot be my disciple.
And whosoever doth not bear his cross,
and come after me, cannot be my disciple.*

September 4, 2016

Thoughts for the Week

Scripture – Philemon 9:10, 12-17 • Luke 14:24-33

Observing little children, especially those newly born, can be a delightful and instructive endeavor. I do not have the opportunity very often to watch the actions of little kids but when I do, the thing that first captivates my attention is the child's early-on effort to discover and understand whatever surrounds it: the softness of its mother face, the warmth of her when she is holding him or her. Later, the child will try to explore whatever is within its reach, especially bells that jingle or objects that are colorful. I am going to make a bold assertion now and suggest that all this activity is actually a search for wisdom even though the child may not perceive it as such. Nonetheless, it all seems to be an exploration into the unknown, the mysterious, the mystical, even, the holy that surrounds this tiny being.

Obviously, as that child grows into maturity, it will continue to be exposed to many more complicated experiences of learning at a higher level. Nonetheless, that basic human instinct of attempting to discover the unknown, occupies much of our time and effort for the remainder of our lives. We never seem satisfied unless we continue to plumb the depths of everything that is understandable in this fascinating universe around us. That instinct seems to be written in our very being, the sense that there is a deep, impenetrable and profound meaning in this planet where we dwell; it is up to us to discover what that is. Again, it's all involved with the human pursuit of wisdom.

Some theologians have thought long and deeply about the difference between human wisdom and the wisdom of God. They often point out that the human mind is weighed down by the body - the corruptible body that burdens the soul; we are overwhelmed with the infinity of human concerns. They postulate that if the things of earth are hardly within our grasp, how can we expect to understand matters of Spirit?

When we read the life of Jesus in the gospels we often find that he also faced this same dilemma, the question of how humans can speak of things divine.

Some biblical scholars will insist that Jesus, like most other people of his day, could not read or write; and yet when we hear Jesus speak to the crowds, he seems to be able to convey the sense of the sacred to his listeners by way of human stories, examples, metaphors, even a bit of humor occasionally. He would say, for instance, when speaking of God's kingdom: "Consider the lilies of the field, the swallows of the air; think about the meaning of the evening sunset; perhaps it is a predictor of rain tomorrow, who knows."

What Jesus seems to be doing here and in other instances as well, is to suggest that the way of insight into the divine is through the earthly, the natural, the historical, especially the human. There is a certain sense of the sacred

contained in whatever is around us on this planet.

Could it be possible, therefore, that each time we try to understand some mystery, when we try to find clarity in some human experience, we are actually on a quest for divine knowledge, the search for divine wisdom? It does not sound too outrageous, does it? After all, God created the human mind for some mysterious (divine) purpose.

Here, finally, is a quote that may give us a further bit of insight into this matter of wisdom. T.S. Eliot the British-American poet once wrote: "We will not cease from exploration; and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time."

And what can we make of all this? How about, "The search for wisdom is a search for God."

Happy Birthday - Ally (9/8)

One in Christ Moment

Jesus would not allow a potential disciple to first bury his father. Many Scripture scholars have commented that this man's father had not yet died, and so anyone who wishes to be Jesus' disciple must renounce all His possessions, including a potential inheritance. Elsewhere, Jesus said that if anyone comes to Him without hating his father and mother, that person cannot be His disciple.

Hate is a strong word. In the language of Jesus' time, there were no words to express the concept of loving more and loving less. The only words in that language were to love or to not love, that is, hate. For a disciple, loving Jesus comes first. All other relationships by comparison seem to be hateful.

Jesus criticizes some scribes and Pharisees for refusing to support their aging parents by pretending to dedicate their finances to God as 'korban' while actually using that money for their own interests. That kind of shifty practice is indeed hating one's parents, but that's not the kind of "hate" Jesus calls His disciples to practice.

When Elisha asked to say farewell to his parents, Elijah permitted it. Elisha kissed his parents goodbye and followed Elijah. Elisha proved his total commitment to being Elijah's disciple by slaughtering his oxen and chopping up his wooden plow for fuel to cook the oxen to serve the meat to his people. Thereby, Elisha had no way to return to farming; he was totally committed.

Jesus calls us to be His disciples. Any possessions Jesus permits us to keep are then used completely to serve Him. There is no turning back. Following Jesus as His disciple comes first.