

Pk's Perspectives ... Loving People

People are often curious about whether or not I struggle in my journey with Jesus and when I respond, "Oh, heck yeah!" they immediately want to know specifics about the things that cause me to struggle, doubt, and/or question my faith. The astonishment on people's faces when they find out I grapple with my faith leads me to think that folks assume ministers have all the spiritual answers and maybe they do! For all I know, I may be the only pastor that doesn't have it all figured out...which could explain why I'm not entirely comfortable hanging out with other ministers!

Anyway, I sometimes wrestle with BROAD questions that I know my finite mind will never be able to answer. "Could there be another angelic rebellion in the heavens like the one that led to Satan's banishment?" "Where/When did God begin...how does an eternal Being start out that way?" "Could there exist another solar system, galaxy, and universe where our infinite and omnipotent God has created beings in His own image?" "What's a body to do in heaven; are there deadlines in eternity?" I mess around with questions like this in some of my reflective moments and I always end up at the place of putting my faith in God and what He has revealed to me in the Bible.

There is another more practical thing with which I struggle on a daily basis: I struggle to love people well. And I struggle with the fact that I struggle to love people well. My love for people is directly proportionate to my experience of God's love for me. So if I'm scuffling to love people well it only follows that my experience of God's love is shallow and/or inconsistent. My capacity for loving people unconditionally, extravagantly and without any thought of personal benefit is only as great as the extent to which I am truly breathing the intimate relationship of God's unconditional, extravagant love that drowned my heart when Jesus rescued me.

God is holy, unblemished love; love is the heart of the Gospel. 1 Corinthians 13 shows me that my religious displays are just hullabaloo if agape love is lacking. Jesus explains the imperative of loving my enemies as well as the friends that love me back and reminds me to love my neighbor; it's in John 13 that Jesus brings clarity when He encourages me to love people the same way He has loved me. In 1 Corinthians 14 God says "pursue love" and in chapter 16 tells me "every action must be done with love." Ephesians 4 instructs me to "speak the truth in love." And here's the truth bomb that hits me like a punch in the gut: "The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love." (1 John 4:8)

The cry of my heart is to be so deeply and completely submerged in the love of Christ so as to be able to understand Paul's meaning when he wrote, "I no longer live but Christ lives in me." I thirst to grow in Christ-likeness so that when looking into the eyes of another human – irrespective of race or gender or religious leaning or familiarity or socio-economic standing or educational accomplishment or nationality or physical appearance or past mistakes or political associations or potential reciprocity or any other thing that divides humanity – my first instinct is loving that person unconditionally and extravagantly with the love of Christ.

During the changing seasons of my 55-year life journey I have desired to excel in various disciplines: education, music, sports, preaching. But those yearnings have wilted in the heat of this intense and evolving passion to excel in the most basic aspect of my faith: loving people well. Cya @ Sunday School & Worship. Pk.