
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

November 16, 2014

God's Desire

*“Which commandment is the most important of all?”
Jesus replied, ‘The most important one is Israel, listen!
Our God is one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your being, with all your mind, and with all your strength.
The second is this, You will love your neighbor as yourself.’”
Mark 12:28b-31 (Common English Bible)*

The question, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” is telling, even indicting. The question discloses the human heart that continually seeks, with considerable eagerness, to advance in personal stature by right belief and acts of piety. It is a question that is less concerned for another. The concern is for self and doing all that is necessary to be held in high esteem by others. So, what is sought is an understanding of the rank and priority of scale of God's laws. With this knowledge is the ability to focus behavior for maximum value in the sight of God – it is the striving for self-righteousness. Are we to do this first or the other?

Of course, this isn't the only place we see this condition of the human heart. Jesus addresses this on multiple occasions, most notably in the sixth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, “Be careful that you don't practice your religion in front of people to draw their attention. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven (verse 1).” Such behavior – or condition of the heart – misses the aim of God's story. What God desires is “to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8).” Striving to please God by demonstrations of piety is devoid of any semblance of humility.

God's desire is not for sacrifices and human scrambling for an esteemed position among God's people. Instead, God's pleasure is dwelling with humanity and abiding together as God leads us into a deeper understanding and embrace of love – love for God and love for neighbor. More, God is more than a participant in this covenantal community; God is the prime sustainer and most glorious inhabitant. The resurrection of Jesus marks the end of self-righteousness.

Jesus' answer to the question, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” is a call to unshackle ourselves from a faith that values right belief and outward acts of piety over transformed hearts, lives, and communities. God's concern is about life together, not one's personal stature. Anything else marginalizes the central message and objective of Jesus – the call to right relationships – and imprisons once again the human heart in ceaseless striving to earn favor with God. Walk in love, teaches Jesus, and in this walk the truth of God's Kingdom will have its finest witness.

Prayer: So saturate me with the experience of Your love that Your love may overflow from me to everyone I meet today. Amen.

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