
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

December 22, 2013

A Faith That Gets Noticed By God

“He has told you, human one, what is good and what the Lord requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God.”

Micah 6:8 (Common English Bible)

Henry Sloane Coffin observes that walking humbly with God has not been characteristic of modern Christians. Coffin pondered deeply on the question of what it means to be a person of faith. I do not know what he thought about this passage from the prophet Micah but it seems that the prophet has captured it in a nutshell: God’s people do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with God. Here is a demonstration of faith that gets noticed by God.

Recently, the pope made some observations about unchecked capitalism. As a man of deep faith he felt that the income inequity in the world represents the failure to do what is just by all of God’s people. The political and social debate that followed has been fierce. In fact, the rhetoric has been quite heated if not mean-spirited. Good points have been made by parties across the political spectrum. So have some rather weak arguments been advanced. The point here is not who is right and who is wrong; not whether the pope is right or the pope is wrong. What has been clear in this rancorous conversation is the lack of humility. Coffin is right. Once we have an opinion, political or otherwise, humility is no longer invited to the party.

Earlier in this chapter from the prophet Micah, the question turns on how much sacrifice is required to be noticed by God; how much sacrifice it takes to please God. Burnt offerings of year-old calves? Thousands of rams with an equally generous amount of oil? Perhaps the sacrifice of our oldest child? The prophet answers that none of that pleases the Lord. What God desires is behavior that demonstrates justice and kindness embodied in a life that shows deference to God.

The wonderful preacher William Willimon once was asked a very specific question – a specific response to how Christians must live and vote and act was sought. With considerable wisdom Willimon answered that his baptismal burden was to preach the Bible. The one who was asking also had a baptismal burden. Their burden was to seek from God through sincere and earnest prayer what obedience to God’s Word looked like in their life. One may agree with the pope about the abuse of capitalism. Another may disagree. All of God’s people are called to seek – with humility – God’s personal claim upon their life and what that means for walking each day with our Lord.

Forgive us, God, for behavior that ignores the possibility of truth in another. Humble our stubborn spirit that we may walk with You in a manner that brings glory to Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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