
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

December 28, 2014

“Discerning the Powers That Seek to Claim Us”

“I will follow you, Lord, but first...”

Luke 9:61 (Common English Bible)

There are great powers at work in the world today and each one seeks to lay claim to our hopes, dreams, and desires. One originates in the early pages of the Bible, the power of mistrust sown by Satan into the hearts of Adam and Eve. This is a power that generates fear that we are alone and defenseless. Permitted to claim the hearts of women and men, this power happily stirs selfishness and meanness. People mobilize resources to protect themselves from harm and from theft. Scarcity of the good things of life is feared, crushing generosity.

Another is seen in those religious leaders who are determined to foist upon anyone and everyone their own particular view of living obediently and righteously. We meet them in the pages of the Bible as the Pharisees and Sadducees. Today they are experienced in the fist and sword of religious extremists around the world. Infidel, meaning unbeliever, is the favored description given to those who refuse to believe as they believe. Its use is more than a descriptor of one who doesn't believe; often it is used to declare hatred.

A third power may be called an invitation; the invitation that comes down from heaven. This power also lays constant claim upon men and women. Yet, unlike the first two mentioned above, this power does not manipulate or coerce. It is embodied in a person, the person of Jesus and moves toward us with empathy, concern and love. It does not impose but always calls to us to a place where our burdens may be shouldered by almighty God. It is a power that seeks not to control but to give release from the struggles of guilt, shame and despair. True, it is a power that demands all we are and have, not for God's sake, but rather, to set us free from the weight of concern and worry. This power calls us to find our ultimate treasure in living for something greater than us.

Jesus issues the invitation. It is an invitation to follow him and trust in his care and love. Each day the invitation is fresh and waits our response. If the answer is, “but first...” it may be that we are held captive to another power. Such an answer is to offer only a fraction of our devotion. It is an indication that our life is off-center and there is soul work to be done. Christ never seeks only a part of us – or a delay to give ourselves completely. Christ's invitation is a call to a passion, an enthusiasm, and a consuming zeal that directs all of our energy and desires to live in such a way the world calls us mad. But it is a call that leads to an experience of such love that our lives are changed and we discover all our fears and worry have been scattered.

Prayer: Grant me the wisdom, O God, to discern the way that leads to life and joy. In Christ's Name, I ask. Amen.

Doug Hood

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