
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

March 16, 2014

Participating in the Way of Christ.

“Carry each other’s burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

Galatians 6:2 (Common English Bible)

In Pennsylvania I shared Thursday evenings with a small group of three other men. We studied the Bible together and discussed what it meant to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. Difficult questions were raised and answers were not always found. During the winter months we enjoyed coffee to warm ourselves but the true warmth came from sharing ourselves fully with one another. The joys we were enjoying with our families began nearly every Thursday evening. Disappointments and sorrows were also shared. Some evenings were filled with laughter. Other evenings were given over to earnest prayer for a group member experiencing a difficulty.

To carry each other’s burdens is the way of Christ. Though there are various ways to do this – telephone calls, invitations to share a meal and visits in the home or hospital during times of difficulty to name a few – nothing is more effective than regular, intentional meetings with a small group. If anything is meant to last, a solid structure is required. Regular meetings with a small group provide the solid structure for support, encouragement and accountability as we seek to know Jesus more fully and follow Him more intentionally. Certainly this is why Jesus used the small group model for building twelve men into strong disciples.

But there is more in this sentence of scripture than the call to care for each other. Paul, the author of Galatians, points to the person and ministry of Jesus as the “benchmark” of what we are to do. We are asked to take a careful look at how Jesus carried the burdens of others. Jesus is the “carrier of burdens” par excellence.

Two themes emerge from such a careful look at the Man, Jesus, and His ministry. First, it is abundantly pointed out that Jesus did not come to be served. Think about how radical that is. Nearly every complaint or criticism heard in the church has to do with someone feeling that his or her desires and needs have not been served. We live in an “it’s about me” culture. The difficulty is, that isn’t the way of Jesus. This attitude does not fulfill the law of Christ.

The second theme is related to the first: Christ came to give away His life for others – literally. Jesus wasn’t interested in self-preservation or demanding from others that His needs be met. A careful and authentic look at Jesus reminds us that His life was about humility, sacrifice and suffering for others. Once we understand this, it becomes more difficult to entertain high thoughts of ourselves. Contemplating the “law of Christ” has a remarkable way of subduing the reign of conceit in our hearts.

We acknowledge, O God, that too often we make church about us – our needs, our spiritual growth and our desires, rather than about You and Your kingdom. Forgive selfish criticisms that make the church about us and show us a more excellent way – the way of Jesus Christ. Amen.

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