
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

March 8, 2015

The Full Development of Faith

"I want to do your will, my God."

Psalm 40:8

Spring training, 2015 will find Giancarlo Stanton suited-up as a Miami Marlin. Signed to a thirteen year, \$325 million dollar contract – more money than any other American athlete in a single contract – Stanton was not easily convinced that this was the right move in his career. The contract offered Stanton was unprecedented in both length and value. If money alone was the determining factor, it was a clear decision. It wasn't. Ben Reiter writes in the current issue of *Sport's Illustrated* that Stanton is "driven by something else: a desire to wring everything he could out of his gifted body. So he has pushed himself to become an all-around force."ⁱ Naturally, that personal drive could be pursued with any MLB franchise. Where Stanton played baseball would be driven by something higher than the pursuit of personal wealth.

A life that reaches for something higher than personal gain is rare and spacious. Here, in this Psalm, the one who writes declares that they desire to do God's will. This marks a mature stage in discipleship. Listen to many prayers today and what is heard is a plea that God honors the will of the individual. These are not the prayers of a life fully consecrated to God. To address God at all in prayer indicates the presence of a faith journey. But such a journey is not complete until there is absent any desire except God's will.

Prayers of those new to the faith naturally begin with requests for oneself. This is not altogether a bad thing. Prayer itself indicates the presence of trust in a God who is concerned and desires our good. Even the prayer taught us by our Lord - the Lord's Prayer - includes a personal request, "Give us the bread we need for today." (Matthew 6:11 Common English Bible) After faith begins to experience growth there is noticed some constraint and reluctance in making personal requests known to God. The growing faith becomes inclined to know God and God's will.

It is here, in this simple prayer of the Psalmist, "*I want to do your will, my God,*" that faith reaches full development. What at first was constrained has come at length to be natural. The heart is fixed on nothing less than pleasing God. The bent of life is God-ward where the best of everything abides. It is here that we become what we were created to be - more fully human and less self-centered. And the responsive service of our life to others is broadened.

Prayer: *My prayer today, Lord, is that my own heart may be as that of John the Baptist when he said, "I must decrease and He (Jesus) must increase." Amen.*

Doug Hood

ⁱ Ben Reiter, "Miami Masterpiece." *Sports Illustrated*. March 2, 2015, pages 46-53.