
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

July 3, 2016

The Weight of Guilt

*“Come to me, all you who are struggling hard and carrying heavy loads,
and I will give you rest. Put on my yoke, and learn from me.
I’m gentle and humble. And you will find rest for yourselves.”*
Matthew 11: 28, 29 (Common English Bible)

During my recent trip to the Holy Land I saw a donkey carrying a heavy load, with heaving sides and hanging its head, its strength almost spent. It appeared as though this animal was ready to sink. Certainly, Jesus saw something similar. A master teacher, Jesus would take what was familiar to the people of his day, point to it, and then make use of it as an object lesson for opening-up the great truths of God’s presence and work. A donkey, struggling hard under the weight of a heavy load, may be the object lesson here in these few sentences of Matthew’s Gospel.

There are moments in our life when we know the burden of that donkey. We struggle hard, carry heavy loads and our bodies – and spirit – become weary. Our strength is not equal to the weight. We feel as though we will sink under it all. It is precisely at that moment, the moment we fear that we will collapse, that Jesus promises “rest.” There is an intense force and allure to this gracious promise. When our own strength has been spent, Jesus shows-up. And our gigantic weight, whatever it may be, is made manageable once again.

I am convinced that of the scattered army of things that weigh heavily upon the human heart, none is greater than guilt. There is no exhaustion like the exhaustion created by guilt. It marshals our best efforts to defeat it only to exact a terrible drain upon our energies, dragging many into hopelessness and despair. What I am now certain of is that there is only one hope for those sinking beneath the crushing weight of guilt. It is found in the infinite power of divine forgiveness, the forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

Jesus’ invitation is, “Come to me.” So rest is to be gained by finding Christ. Pay attention to Christ long enough and what will be discovered is that Christ himself found rest in his heavenly Father. What’s more, that rest he found was sought each day. Jesus never was content to live on stale grace from his Father. It was sought fresh each day. So that is our example. Christ wants his gift of “rest” to be a daily find; something we seek from him each day. And that is how it is to be retained, seeking it day after day. Christ’s desire is that life will be a prolonged spiritual quest, seeking Christ and knowing Christ more fully each day. It will be then that the weight of guilt is removed and rest is found.

Doug Hood