
Heart and Soul ... A Weekly Meditation

September 7, 2014

A Perilous Postponement

"I will follow You, Lord, but first let me say goodbye to those in my house."
Luke 9:61 (Common English Bible)

Here is someone who experienced an impulse of faith, an impulse that disclosed the beauty of following Jesus as Lord. Perhaps it was something in the words Jesus spoke. Perhaps it was something about the manner and spirit of Jesus that was captivating. Or perhaps it was the evidence that there was something extraordinary about the quality of life experienced by others following Jesus. Whatever the cause, here is someone whose conscience and heart was aroused such that they experienced an impulse which urged an immediate decision to follow Jesus. But, obedience to the impulse is delayed, "but first let me say goodbye to those in my house."

Jesus says, "No." It is unacceptable to Jesus that an impulse to follow may be delayed by anything, even if it is simply to say goodbye to loved ones. Does that appear harsh? Doesn't it seem inconsiderate, even severe, that Jesus rejects this reasonable request to say goodbye? It may seem so. Yet, is it harsh for someone to grab a child quickly – and with considerable force – and draw them away from a car traveling in the child's path? Or would this be viewed as an act of love? The emphasis of Jesus' response is love.

Our Lord knows that postponement meant the very real possibility of destruction, that if obedience to a sacred impulse to follow Jesus is deferred to another time there may be no impulse to obey. Isn't it a common experience that at one moment we may experience a deep craving for something, like ice cream, and at another moment it is gone? And so underneath Jesus' rebuke is the awful concern that a sacred impulse delayed is a sacred impulse lost.

If an impulse promises more value to life than a scoop of ice cream then it must be converted into action immediately. There must be no period of delay or resting. If a life-giving impulse is not converted into immediate action there is no achievement. The only way to keep such an impulse sweet is to change it into an act immediately. It is then that its gracious influence is experienced into eternity.

Jesus is offering life, life in following Him. An impulse to accept this invitation in the present moment may be lost in the next. It is perilous to wait. Such a postponement may result in the destruction of our life with God. "Follow Me" must not be answered with, "I will follow You" but with, "I will follow You now."

Forgive my hesitancy to follow You immediately, Heavenly Father. Grant me the wisdom to hear Your extraordinary call in the ordinariness of life and the faith that does not delay in obedience. Amen.

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