

Eric Butterworth Speaks

Essay #6
HUMILITY

"I beleive that the first test of a truly great man is his humility," wrote John Ruskin. All about us we see arrogance and the refusal to admit mistakes. The Prophet Micah in one short verse set forth an injunction for the manner of living epitomized in the loftiest spiritual ideal, "What doth God require of thee but to do justly and to love kindness and to walk humbly with thy God?"

We see this realized in Jesus, who never took credit for good works accomplished. "I speak not for myself but the Father abiding in me doeth His works. Whoso shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted...If any man shall be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all." He likewise stated in the Beatitudes, "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." Of himself, he said, "I am meek and lowly in heart."

When he used the word meekness, there was something quite different in his mind. The ancient Greek "praeis," which we translate "meek," really connotes "tame," in the sense of being not wild and unrestrained. The word meek as used by Jesus indicated those who are happy and willing to submit themselves to the creative process within and allow the divine action to be fulfilled in their lives, to permit divine guidance and inspiration to move them, to get plugged in or turned on from an inner source. The Orientals have an expression, "Meekness compels God Himself." God is not a capricious being who makes his children grovel before Him and obey without questions, but rather He is a great essence of life and light and substance flowing in and through those who are the most non-resistant channels.

Meekness essentially denotes a consciousness toward God. It has nothing to do with covering before others or letting them push you around; it means rather a receptivity and a non-resistance to God, to that which is within you. It leads to humility, for to be a good conductor of the life, light, and substance of spirit, our entire consciousness and character must be free from resistance, from bitterness, and from the limiting thoughts of the ego. Jesus was not physically any different from you and me, but he became the powerful one that he was because he submitted wholeheartedly to the flow of the spirit in and through him. To his disciples he stressed the need for open-mindedness and spiritual understanding, for freedom from pride or possessiveness or authority. Jesus realized as few before or since that spiritual growth hinges on a receptive attitude, a teachable spirit, a consciousness not blocked by pride or position or accumulation of goods. Meekness and humility are really a sensitivity or a surrender of consciousness to the influence of something, an inner something.

Man is so constituted that he becomes much like that to which he gives attention; this is the law of his being, as the poet says, "God, if thou seest God; dust if thou seest dust." As a person continues to grant attention to an objective or condition, whatever it may be, it reveals more and more of its qualities, attributes, nature, finally uncovering to the beholder its purpose and meaning. Psychologically observed, what enters the mind sooner or later becomes motive in the body. The one who ponders persistently on music, in study and enjoyment, becomes in a sense the very incarnation of music; his presence exudes it, he bears about him the distinction of a musician. A truly qualified craftsman shows it in his posture, his way of doing things, his manner of moving about. When a man gives himself completely to the learning of his trade and is entirely willing to meet its demands on him, he is practicing humility as Jesus intended him to, for he is being truly receptive and responsive to a creative process through him until it actually comes out his fingertips. The meek apprentice becomes in time the master craftsman, animated by the spirit of his craft and accomplished and skillful in it. The artlessness he bears, his attunement with his calling, carries with it no sense of heavy labor; rather, he has a sense of lightsome joy. Not simply getting money

but the giving of himself and the best that is within him becomes his objective in life, and to such a workman's heart and mind come rewards unmatched with consequent recognition. In a very real sense it is the meek who inherit the earth.

When a person gives his attention to God, to the intuitive and inspirational he does great things, knowing all the time how much he depends on the inner source; he knows he cannot go it alone. True confidence is rooted in humility. The truly humble individual may even appear egotistical; he may amaze others with his self-confidence, his sureness, even his brashness, but in his inner life he has a total acceptance of "I of myself can do nothing."

There are to be seen successful people who are actually failures, so dependent on constant attention for personal reassurance that they must go on creating a great show to mask their inner fear of failure and of insufficiency. Such are crushed if something does not succeed for them, and they fly into a rage if criticized. Others might be called failures but they are really successful because they are fulfilling that which they are led to do and giving themselves to be in genuine humility; they are free from pride or fear of failure, giving them a determination that keeps them going against many odds.

It was the humility of Jesus that made his words so authoritative, his life so great, and the Christian movement in its beginnings so compelling and so lasting even today. Whenever religious leaders, in Christianity or in any other religious or social or political movement, have become pompous, self-righteous, egotistical, and so forth, they have forsaken the true ideal, in this case of Christianity. The power of humility is beyond calculation. Any individual can alter his life for the good by pursuing this idea of humility. It is well to remember that if we are suspicious or resistant or hurt about or toward other people it is because something in us needs resolving. True humility enables us to go about performing a task, accepting our responsibilities no matter what is said or done by others.

All of us need to understand that humility is needed to resolve the conflicts that lead to the inhumanity of war and exploitation; it is the most needed quality in the world and in the lives of us all, genuine, true humility, not a put-on display to attract attention.

Humility is not putting on a show; it is a feeling, a sense of inner oneness, a receptivity to the divine flow; it is an acknowledgement that "I of myself can do nothing, but with that inner power I do all things." In worldly life, it is confidence, it is assurance, it is drive, all based on the realization as Abraham Lincoln said, "Without the help of Him who attends me, I cannot succeed; but with that help, I cannot fail."