

WHAT DOES IT MEAN: NO HATERS HERE?

I was driving downtown to the Cathedral on Thursday late afternoon. I was on the Martin Luther King Drive as it entered the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. I was on the far left going around the Art Museum Circle and then I wanted to drive down the Parkway to the Cathedral. There was a lot of traffic. A car came up from behind me on my right side, my blind side and sped directly in front of me to go around me to go to the left. I yelled “Yo!” And they were gone. I thought to myself that was really close. I hate when that happens.

I do. I hate that kind of stuff, careless drivers in a hurry. I have been in my share of accidents because of such shenanigans. That’s why I hate it. I hate the disruption to my life, the paperwork, the need to get a rental car, paying the insurance deductible, the inconvenience. I hate that it happened to me, that I have to deal with someone else’s carelessness or misjudgment. But while I hate all of that, I can’t say I ever hated the person who did it, who cut me off or hit my car. I didn’t hate them. Just what they did.

So what is Jesus saying today? Unless you hate your mother and father (Aren’t we supposed to love and honor them according to the Commandment?). Unless you hate your spouse and children, hate your brothers and sisters you cannot be my disciple. Does Jesus mean that? Really? Hate? Aren’t we supposed to love everyone? Even our enemies? How can He say here to hate all the people we are supposed to hold dear? What gives? Why would Jesus say such a thing?

Well, for one thing He definitely gets our attention. And sometimes that is a problem for the Lord. We aren’t really paying attention, not really listening. But He has our attention now. Hate? Does He mean hate hate? Or does He mean something less than hate? What point is the Lord trying to make? This is about who He is. If He really is the Holy One of God, if He really is the long awaited Messiah who has come to save the world, then it is no longer a time for business as usual. Everything we do, every relationship we have, everything we stand for and hold dear has to be reassessed in the light of Jesus—his Presence, His Teaching, His Word, His Deeds, His challenges, His suffering, His death and ultimately his resurrection. Everything.

And there is nothing in our lives, nothing in our world that is more important than our relationship with Him and our response to Him. That is what He is trying to communicate. It

is a matter of recognizing and accepting and believing in Him. It is about making a reassessment of our lives in terms of who Jesus is and what He calls us to do. Each person has to decide. Either Jesus is who He claims to be or he is the greatest impostor and pretender in the history of the world. But if Jesus really is the Son of God in our flesh and if Jesus really has risen from the tomb then every person on this planet better pay attention. All of us, each of us—we are here for a reason. We come from God and we are destined to return to God.

A few days back I was called over to Artman Home to anoint a woman who had suddenly started to decline rapidly. She was barely breathing when I got there. No family present. Alone. In a Nursing Home bed. About to die. I sat by her bedside. I held her hand and stroked it. I prayed some of the rosary out loud. I spoke her name and I told her that her family wanted me to give her the anointing of the sick. I did and prayed an absolution over her for all her sins. Then I spoke to her that the Lord was going to come for her soon and that he would just say her name and that she wasn't to be afraid. Just say "Yes, Lord." And then go with Him. It will be beautiful and wonderful. I could see her trying to grasp what I was saying, trying to process the words.

Just like us—now. Same thing. Trying to process what we are hearing. Trying to make sense of it. Trying to open our hearts and souls to what the Lord is saying but more—to open to Who the Lord is. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world. He desires a relationship with you. He asks you to place that relationship first in your heart and then all the other relationships in terms of that one relationship. All will then unfold in accordance with the will of his Father.

What I have just spoken to you is true. The great truth. Not everyone in our world believes that truth, accepts that truth or wants to hear that truth. But that does not lessen that Truth. Each of us gets to decide. You are here because you have made the choice. My responsibility to you is to remind you and to encourage you when you falter. Be not afraid little flock. Our Lord doesn't want us to hate anyone but He does want us to pay attention to what is really going on.

May He bless us today and give us his peace.