

The Question of the Week

“Whoever loves father or mother, son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me, Jesus said.”
Matthew 10: 37

Tough words. What Jesus says above are tough words. Your spouse comes first. Your children come first. Your familial responsibilities come first. Then maybe the preacher man. Then, maybe, Jesus. That is how we actually think. And Jesus knows it. That’s why he said what he said. What we don’t get is that we cannot actually put anyone else first unless we put Jesus first. Why? Because it is by the power of what Jesus bestows and graces us with, namely, the very Spirit of God, that any and all the living for the other is even rendered possible. Not that we think we need Jesus in our lives to do these things. We more often believe we are pretty capable of living for others as we are presently constituted.

But I submit to you that the way we are presently constituted is precisely as Jesus intends us. He has already poured forth his Spirit into us. That you can live for any other person is because Jesus empowers you to do so. That remains true whether you realize it or not. One day it will be revealed to you. Then it will be crystal clear. But until that day the reality remains true. Jesus knows this. That is why he says to put him first in our lives.

What does this all mean? It means that we need him. Can’t really live without him even though we want to. It means that Jesus brings an indispensable dimension to our human lives. Without his empowerment all we are capable of is wanting to live a certain way or dreaming about living a certain way or desiring to live a certain way. We just will not be able to do it. Why? Because the impact of sin—the lack of trust, the unwillingness to obey, the selfishness of mind and heart, the fear of consequences and intimacy with God, the violence toward the other, the willingness to deceive—because these all prevent us from living out what our hearts desire. We can want to get there but we cannot get there. However, the grace of Jesus is not like the offense that sin is. Sin tears, spreads fear and destroys. Grace transforms, enables, empowers, uplifts, and eventually triumphs. The Grace that Jesus is and the Grace that Jesus brings is what makes all things new. We need him We need what he brings. Are you beginning to see? That is the question of the week.