

TO WHAT HAVE I YOKED MYSELF?

Jesus says: “I give praise to you, Father, for although you have hidden these things from the learned and the clever you have revealed to little ones.” So. To what is Jesus referring when he says this? What has the Father hidden from the smart and clever people? What has the Father revealed to little ones? Good questions.

I confess that sometimes I feel as if I have missed something with Jesus. What do I mean? I believe in Jesus and all that He revealed and taught, that he came from God, became one of us to lead us into the Kingdom of God. I believe he taught and healed. I believe he challenged and confronted those who were in power. He knew it would cost him his life. He knew that he had to force the issue so that the evil in this world would show its true self, it’s very ugly side. I believe he rose from the dead on the third day. I believe he lives in eternity. I believe he has breathed his Spirit upon us.

But still I feel as if I am missing something. Part of me has always believed that being close to Jesus is supposed to make our problems go away and produce in us a sense of holiness or a consciousness of being in harmony with God and creation. I admit that there have been times when I believed that a sign that things were going well in my spiritual life was that I would have no suffering. I would be completely free from temptations, and just generally feel holy. Consequentially, when I experience suffering or are lacking in interior consolations, or...find that I have to drag myself to confession, I begin to feel discouragement and frustration. Why do I still suffer? Why aren’t things getting easier? Why do I **not** feel more virtuous?”

A Carmelite priest named Father Simeon answered these questions. Perhaps “the goal of the Christian life is not to get to a point where we can bask in our own sense of sanctity and in affirmation from others.” He reminds us how difficult it is for us as disciples to realize the truth that **real growth** and movement consist in **staying where we are**, that is, staying in our condition as disciples and servants! If Christ gave his life as a ransom for me, and I, as his disciple, am invited to share in his destiny, then the cross and suffering just might mean that things are (actually) going well, not poorly?” Oh! Could that be? Is that what the Father has revealed to little ones? That started me thinking. Maybe I have allowed expectations to develop in me that really are not right.

Do you remember the gospel story of the paralyzed young man that his friends lower through the roof into the room where Jesus is so that Jesus will cure him? They remove some tiles and they lower the paralyzed man down into the room. We all remember that Jesus cures the man. But do you remember what Jesus says to the man first? He says: “Your sins are forgiven.” That creates a great

disturbance among the scribes. They challenge him. “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” It is actually the correct question. And Jesus, by saying what he said, is actually making a statement about his own identity. I read recently a little made-up dialogue between the newly cured paralyzed man and one of his friends when they got home that night. It goes like this:

“And late in the night, as the heavens grew alive and bright, I asked my friend whether he too had felt penetrated by the simple question Jesus had asked. “I saw your expression,” I insisted, “how your eyes grew wide . . .” My friend put down his wine, reaching across from where we each were sitting and grabbing my wrist. “Yes. Because until that moment, I never understood.”

He shook his head in wonder, his eyes holding mine. “(Jesus) had already pronounced me forgiven, and yet in that instant—with his question to the scribes—I saw all of my sins, and how each of them originated not in the body, but in my mind and heart. I saw how, even in my helpless state, I gave offense to heaven. In all of the ways I had looked upon women as they walked by me, imagining what I could and would do with them, if only my body would obey; in how—even as I lay immobile, dependent upon the help of others to simply relieve myself—I still dared to judge the way one man held his head too high as he walked, how another seemed too ugly to be lovable, how this one’s skin was too mottled, how that one was too dark.” His grip weakened on my wrist, but his voice was low and fervent.

“I understood the truth of it. I understood that my own heart had made room for wickedness and then entertained it, making it welcome with ever-more frequency. Without knowing how, or when, (and even though paralyzed) I had permitted my heart to become filled with hate, with suspicion, and with lust, filled with pride and vanity for myself and filled with doubt for everyone else.”

“And now, my friend,” I asked, barely able to breathe in the face of his intensity. “Is your heart healed? Is it cleansed, and better after you met Jesus?” I had to know.

He closed his eyes for a moment, letting loose with a deep sigh before once more raising his head, first to me, and then to heaven. “Today, this night, my heart is broken.” he whispered. “And it is better.”

My friends, the Father always seeks to reveal to us the truth we need. When the Lord Jesus says to us: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me” he is telling us that we have allowed ourselves at times to be yoked to any number of things that were wrong, sinful or bad. The Father reveals this to us. We are to recognize. We are to stop. We are to ask Our Lord to give us his grace. We are to ask him to yoke himself to us—so we can yoke ourselves to him. And then be where we are. And let go of the expectations and be still—and know that He is God.

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.