

(For Monday, September 18, 2017) How do you deal with your tendency toward childishness?

“And Ahab went into his house vexed and sullen because of what Naboth the Jezreelite had said to him, for he [Naboth] had said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.’ And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and would eat no food.” (1Ki.21:4, ESV)

Ahab’s sulking reveals much about his spoiled and egocentric nature. It certainly bears all the traits of childishness. Ah, but there’s some of the child in all of us, isn’t there? We are told repeatedly that God answers all prayer, and that has surely been my experience. But when his answer to our prayer is “No” or “Not now,” how do we react? Haven’t there been times in all of our lives when we, just like Ahab, go into a childishly sulking behavior pattern because God doesn’t give us what we want, when we want it? Instead, wouldn’t the more mature and productive outcome be for us to try and prayerfully determine what it is that God is trying to teach us when certain outcomes are different than we thought they ought to be, or when certain blessings are withheld for a season?

What about you? Are there things in your own relationship with God and with others that need to be ruled by Christian maturity, rather than by your inner child?

(For Tuesday, September 19, 2017) Does the concern for your safety focus on the eternal?

“Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings.” (Ps.61:4, ESV)

Where I live in coastal Georgia we have just gone through a tremendous Hurricane, the likes of which hasn’t been seen in decades. Hurricane Irma has put to rest many illusions people had in our human ability to craft a place of refuge that can withstand nature’s might. In this light, the verse from Psalm 61 is intriguing. The flimsy, temporary shelter offered by a tent, or the protection of wing-feathers seems such an insignificant place to take refuge in the face of impending disaster. But perhaps part of what the Psalmist is saying here is that the protection offered by God has very little to do with physical safety. Rather, the “rock that is stronger than I” and the “strong tower against my enemy” (See vv.3,4) have much more to do with our Spiritual safety in an eternal redoubt.

Do you focus too much on your physical well-being and not enough on your Spiritual security? Because just as the Bible says, “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord.” (Ps.20:7, ESV)

(For Wednesday, September 20, 2017) Are you enough of a rebel?

“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.” (1Cor.2:12, ESV)

With this verse, Paul is clearly laying out for the Church a theology of revelation. This is an important clarification about what he has just said, since in verse 7, the Apostle states that “We impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God...” This statement might be perceived as gnostic, an early heresy that held only the “enlightened” who had been taught certain privileged insights could be saved. But with verse 12, Paul is clearly telling us that the true wisdom of Jesus Christ is revealed to all those in whom the Spirit of God dwells. Two fundamental truths are imparted here. First if the true saving grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ is received by revelation in the Spirit, then it is a salvation which is truly open to all, not just a select, predestined few. Secondly, if this Spirit of God is “not of the world,” then the motivations, professions, and actions of a truly Christian man or woman can never be in complete conformity to this world’s standards. In other words, to be a Christian means to be at least, in part, a rebel.

So, when you find yourself at odds with the conventions of your peers, or your party, or the recognized leaders of our secular society, isn’t this just one more confirmation that you’re living by God’s Spirit rather than the one of this world? Maybe that’s actually something to celebrated!

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(For Thursday, September 21, 2017) Have you come to your place of blessing in the middle of pain?

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.”
(Mt.5:10, ESV)

I have always found it interesting that there are two basic kinds of blessings in the Beatitudes. There are the blessings described by Jesus which are in the future tense. Thus those who mourn **will** be comforted, the meek **will** inherit the earth, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness **will** be satisfied, the merciful **will** receive mercy, the pure in heart will see, God, and the peace-makers **will** be called “Sons of God.” (See Mt.5:4-9). But there’s another kind of blessing which is immediate; something we don’t have to wait for. Because with regard to “the poor in spirit” (those who recognize the critical need for grace) in verse 3, theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (that is, right now). And concerning those who are persecuted for righteousness sake in verse 10, theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven (that is, right now). And finally, those who are persecuted and slandered on the account of their being followers of Jesus, well they should rejoice and be glad in verse 12, because great is their reward in heaven (that is, already, in this present moment). It has been my experience that when I am able to be in pain, and yet proclaim the greatness of my God, those are the moments when I realize I am already walking with one foot in heaven.

Have you fully explored the blessings that await you in this very present moment, when you come to the point of actually being blessed enough to be able to glorify God even in the midst of adversity?

(For Friday, September 22, 2017) Do you understand what it means to live in the light?

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.” (Mt.5:14, ESV)

The verse is incredibly rich in meaning. First, it tells us that a Christian man or woman cannot expect to live in the shadows of life’s background. If you’re going to be a follower of Jesus, you may be sure that people will take notice. And not all of their comments about you will be favorable either! Secondly, a mature Christian man or woman cannot expect to live a life of private piety. Too often I have heard people say, “Well my religion is a private matter between me and God.” Nothing could be further from the truth! The Christian faith is one of relationship. The substance of God, the kind of love that Jesus called *Agape* can only exist when people are willing to live in community with each other, and that requires the sharing of experiences and convictions, even with people you may not know very well – ESPECIALLY with people you may not know very well. Finally, this verse is also a promise. If we live our lives in such a way as to show forth the saving grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, we will inevitably become a point of encouragement for and emulation by others. The Christian life begets prominence, though not with the notoriety by which this world evaluates things and people.

Are you willing to live in the light? Because that’s part of the cross we all bear when we commit to following Jesus.

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