

PSALM 15 AND MATTHEW 5:1-12

I ENJOY THE WRITING OF JANE AUSTIN. AND ONE OF THE THINGS THAT INTRIGUES ME THE MOST ABOUT THE WORLD SHE DESCRIBES IS-HOW POLITE, HOW CIVIL THE CHARACTERS ARE TO ONE ANOTHER.

THE BOWING AND CURTSIES, AND MODE OF ADDRESS EVEN TO THOSE ONE DOES NOT LIKE OR BARELY RESPECTS IS-VERY FOREIGN TO HOW MOST PEOPLE IN WESTERN CULTURES TREAT ONE ANOTHER TODAY.

THEN IF ONE ADDS WHAT IS WRITTEN ABOUT OTHERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA, THE POLITENESS OF YESTER-YEAR REALLY BECOMES ALIEN.

AND SO IN COMPARISON TO HOW PEOPLE USED TO AT LEAST PRETEND TO TREAT ONE ANOTHER -WITH RESPECT IN PUBLIC, AND HOW THINGS ARE IN SOCIETY NOW- THE NOTION THAT THERE ARE MANY IN THE WORLD TODAY, WHO COULD BE DESCRIBED AS NEEDING AN “ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT”, SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISING TO HEAR.

IN FACT THIS IDEA IS NOT EVEN NEW. THE MESSAGE OF **PSALM 15** CONVEYS THE BIBLICAL IDEA OF ACTIONS THAT ARE DRAWN FROM ATTITUDE.

THE PSALM ASKS -WHO MAY ABIDE WITH GOD AND DWELL IN THE MIDST OF THE HOLY?

VERSE TWO ANSWERS- “THOSE WHO WALK BLAMELESSLY, AND DO WHAT IS RIGHT, AND SPEAK THE TRUTH FROM THE HEART.”

THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE ANSWER IS THE PHRASE “FROM THE HEART”. IT MEANS-DEEPLY, SINCERELY, RATHER THAN SIMPLY MOUTHING THE WORDS, OR ACTING A PART.

AND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WE HEAR HOW JESUS HIMSELF SUGGESTED THE NEED FOR SINCERITY IN BEING AND DOING IN HIS OPENING TEACHING ON THE MOUNTAIN.

THE WORD “BEATITUDE” ACTUALLY MEANS HAPPY OR BLESSED. AND YET, IT IS HARD TO IGNORE FINDING IN IT THE ENGLISH WORD- “ATTITUDE”.

INDEED, THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS, WHILE CERTAINLY DESCRIBING ACTIONS OR BEING, NONETHELESS FIND THEIR SOURCE IN OUR ATTITUDES.

AFTER ALL, ANYONE CAN ACT, OR PRETEND TO BE HUMBLE, MEEK, GRIEVING ETC., WITHOUT ACTUALLY BEING SO.

JESUS’ TEACHING HOWEVER IS MEANT BE UNDERSTOOD AS A MEETING OF ATTITUDE AND ACTS, OF BEING AND DOING.

FURTHERMORE, THE BEATITUDES HAVE BEEN DESCRIBED AS A “SELF-PORTRAIT” OF JESUS.

IN OTHER WORDS, THROUGH THE BEATITUDES JESUS IS OFFERING A VERBAL PICTURE OF HIS CHARACTER.

THIS MEANS THESE STATEMENTS ALSO CAN BE VIEWED AS A VISION OF WHO- THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS CAN BECOME.

AND WE CAN OWN THEM THROUGH OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST, WITH THE HELP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE NEED FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT’S HELP IS PAINFULLY OBVIOUS WHEN WE REMEMBER HOW THE WORLD VIEWS THINGS.

FOR EXAMPLE- TO GET AHEAD IN LIFE WORLDLY WISDOM IS THAT SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-CONFIDENCE ARE KEY TRAITS TO NURTURE.

SO ALSO ARE THINGS LIKE ASSERTIVENESS, AND DOING WHAT YOU MUST TO GET AHEAD.

AND GRIEVING TOO INTENSELY -WHETHER FOR A DEATH, OR ONE’S OWN SINS, OR THE CONDITION OF THE WORLD IS OFTEN VIEWED AS -EITHER BEING MORBID, FILLED WITH SELF-PITY, OR BEING PESSIMISTIC.

THEN THERE IS THE FACT THE BEING MEEK OR MERCIFUL ARE SIGNS OF WEAKNESS, AS IS PEACE-MAKING AT TIMES.

AND THE IDEA OF HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS, INSTEAD OF ALL THE “WONDERFUL” THINGS THE WORLD OFFERS IS SEEN BY MANY AS BEING TOO RELIGIOUS.

TRULY, FROM A WORLDLY PERSPECTIVE JESUS TEACHING IN HIS SERMON ON THE MOUNT IS PARADOXICAL.

IN OTHER WORDS, HIS STATEMENTS DO NOT SEEM TO MAKE SENSE AND YET THEY ARE TRUE.

WE CAN SEE THIS MORE CLEARLY BY LOOKING AT WHAT THE SAVIOR TAUGHT, BEGINNING WITH THE BLESSINGS OF SPIRITUAL POVERTY.

POVERTY OF SPIRIT IS THE FOUNDATIONAL BEATITUDE IN THAT IT RECOGNIZES OUR NEED FOR GOD AT ALL TIMES.

THE LAYMEN’S COMMENTARY SUGGESTS THAT THE POOR IN SPIRIT ARE THOSE WHO COME TO GOD WITH EMPTY HANDS.

THE LYRICS OF “ROCK OF AGES” CAPTURES THIS IN THE LINE THAT SAYS ABOUT RECEIVING SALVATION-

“NOTHING IN MY HAND I BRING, SIMPLY TO THE CROSS I CLING”.

THE OPPOSITE OF BEING POOR IN SPIRIT, AS WELL AS LACKING IN MEEKNESS, IS ILLUSTRATED IN A STORY ABOUT A VISITOR TO THE BEETHOVEN MUSEUM.

SHE WAS A COLLEGE STUDENT AND A PIANIST, WHO LOVED BEETHOVEN’S MUSIC, AND WAS NATURALLY THRILLED TO SEE THE PIANO HE ACTUALLY COMPOSED SOME OF HIS WORK ON.

THE YOUNG WOMAN OFFERED THE GUARD A SIZABLE TIP IF HE WOULD LET HER PLAY A FEW NOTES ON THE PIANO.

AT FIRST HE REFUSED. BUT THEN, SINCE NO ONE ELSE WAS AROUND, HE GAVE INTO THE TEMPTATION AND ALLOWED HER TO PLAY ON IT FOR A MINUTE OR TWO.

AFTERWARDS SHE THANKED HIM AND THEN SAID “I SUPPOSE ALL THE GREAT PIANISTS WHO COME HERE WANT TO PLAY ON THAT PIANO.”

THE GUARD SHOOK HIS HEAD, INDICATING NO. AND SAID- “THE FAMOUS POLISH PIANIST PADEREWSKI WAS HERE A FEW YEARS AGO, AND HE SAID HE WASN’T WORTHY TO TOUCH IT.”

POVERTY IN SPIRIT IS UNDERSTANDING SOMETHING SIMILAR ABOUT OUR UNWORTHINESS WHEN IT COMES TO US AND GOD.

IT IS A REALIZATION OF OUR NEED FOR THE LORD, NO MATTER HOW WELL WE ARE DOING IN LIFE, OR HOW WELL LIKED OR RESPECTED WE ARE BY OTHERS.

WILLIAM BARCLAY DESCRIBES THE POOR IN SPIRIT AS THOSE WHO REALIZE THINGS MEAN NOTHING AND GOD MEANS EVERYTHING.

ANOTHER VIEW IS THAT THE POOR IN SPIRIT HAVE A HEART FOR THE LORD AND A HEART FOR THE POOR.

IT IS RELATED THEREFORE TO MOURNING IN THAT WE MOURN THE STATE THE WORLD IS IN, AND THE FACT THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN DOES NOT YET FILL THE EARTH.

BUT MOURNING AND THE PROMISE OF COMFORT CAN ALSO BE GRIEF OVER DEATH.

JESUS HIMSELF MOURNED THE DEATH OF HIS FRIEND LAZARUS, RIGHT BEFORE HE RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.

HOWEVER, JESUS ALSO LAMENTED OVER JERUSALEM AND THE REFUSAL OF GOD’S PEOPLE TO BE GATHERED TO HIM.

LIKewise DISTRESS, OVER OUR OWN SIN, AND THE SINFULNESS OF OTHERS, IS INCLUDED IN THIS BEATITUDE.

WE COME NOW TO WHAT IS PERHAPS THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD OF ALL THE BLESSINGS JESUS TAUGHT.

IT SAYS: “BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.”

THIS IS SO OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD BECAUSE MEEK IS USUALLY EQUATED WITH WEAK, FEARFUL, SHY, AND REFUSING TO STAND UP FOR YOURSELF OR OTHERS.

BUT JESUS, HIMSELF, OFFERS A WONDERFUL MODEL OF MEEKNESS.

IN REGARDS TO BEING MEEK, THE SAVIOR USED THAT CONCEPT ABOUT HIMSELF, AS **MATTHEW 11:29** RECORDS:

“TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME, FOR I AM GENTLE AND LOWLY IN HEART, AND YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS.”

THE SAVIOR ALSO SHOWED MEEKNESS BY GOING TO THE CROSS FOR OUR SAKES.

THIS TOOK GREAT STRENGTH, IN THAT HE HAD THE POWER TO SAVE HIMSELF, BUT CHOSE NOT TO USE THE POWER.

THIS OFFERS US A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE OF HOW BEING MEEK IS NOT A SIGN OF BEING WEAK OR A COWARD.

MEEKNESS INCLUDES DOING GOD’S WILL RATHER THAN WHAT WE WANT OR DO NOT WANT TO DO.

IT IS ALSO A MATURITY OF ATTITUDE IN MAKING CHOICES ABOUT WHEN TO TAKE A STAND AND WHEN TO JUST LET THINGS GO.

FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN JESUS OVERTURNED THE TABLES OF THE MONEY CHANGERS IN THE TEMPLE HE WAS NOT BEING MEEK, BY ANY STRETCH OF THE IMAGINATION.

YET, HIS MEEKNESS IS FOUND IN HOW JESUS USUALLY INTERACTED WITH OTHERS.

HE DID NOT TRY TO FORCE THEM TO BELIEVE IN HIM BUT INVITED AND SOMETIMES CHALLENGED THEM TO DO SO.

HE CHOSE TO TEACH ABOUT AND DEMONSTRATE THE VALUE OF GOD'S WAY OVER THE WORLD'S WAY.

OSWALD CHAMBERS SAID THIS: "THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT IS NOT A SET OF RULES AND REGULATIONS.

IT IS A PICTURE OF LIFE WE WILL LIVE WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT IS HAVING HIS UNHINDERED WAY WITH US."

IN OTHER WORDS, CONCERNING THE BEATITUDES, THEY ARE DECLARATIONS OF BLESSINGS NOT COMMANDMENTS.

THEY PRESENT GOD'S PROMISE ABOUT HOW THE SPIRIT CAN AND WILL TRANSFORM CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE NEXT BEATITUDE WE WILL LOOK AT THIS MORNING. IT IS ABOUT THE DESIRE TO EXPERIENCE THIS TRANSFORMATION.

IT TEACHES US THE KEY TO FINDING SATISFACTION IN OUR EARTHLY LIFE IS TO HUNGER AND THIRST FOR WHAT THE WORLD CANNOT PROVIDE.

THIS IS NOT A CALL TO REJECT THE DELIGHTFUL THINGS LIFE ON EARTH OFFERS.

THE JOYS AND PLEASURES OF LIFE HAVE BEEN PLACED BY GOD IN OUR PATHWAY FOR US TO EXPERIENCE.

INDEED MANY OF THE THINGS WE THANK GOD FOR ARE NOT SPIRITUAL DELIGHTS, BUT THINGS WE CAN ONLY ENJOY ON EARTH.

BEING A CHRISTIAN DOES NOT MEAN WE CAN'T HAVE FUN, BUT JESUS REMINDS US OUR DEEPEST NEED IS FOR GOD.

THIS IS WHY HE DRAWS OUR ATTENTION TOWARDS PURSING THE THINGS ONLY OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM CAN SATISFY.

NEXT WE TURN TO THE DECLARATION: "BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL, FOR THEY WILL RECEIVE MERCY."

MERCY IS AT THE HEART OF GOD, IT IS ONE OF THE KEY WAYS GOD SHOWS LOVE.

THE LORD SAID TO MOSES- "I WILL BE GRACIOUS TO WHOM I WILL BE GRACIOUS, AND WILL SHOW MERCY TO WHOM I WILL SHOW MERCY,"

AND THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT GOD: "THE LORD, IS MERCIFUL AND GRACIOUS, SLOW TO ANGER, AND ABOUNDING IN STEADFAST LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS."

JESUS HIMSELF DEMONSTRATED THIS MERCY IN HIS MANY ACTS OF HEALING AND FORGIVENESS, AND ESPECIALLY BY GOING TO THE CROSS TO DIE FOR OUR SINS.

THIS BRINGS US TO HIS DECLARATION ABOUT THE BLESSINGS OF THE PURE IN HEART.

THIS HAS BEEN CALLED THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE OF ALL BLESSINGS, IN THAT TRUE CHRISTIANITY IS A MATTER OF THE HEART.

IT MAY HELP TO REMEMBER THAT BIBLICALLY, THE HEART IS THE CENTER OF OUR BEING, OUR IDENTITY.

A PURE HEART IN THIS TEXT MEANS A HEART THAT HAS ONE ALLEGIANCE, WHICH IS DEVOTION TO GOD.

JESUS EXPLAINED A PURE HEART IN THE STATEMENT HE MADE THAT WE CANNOT SERVE TWO MASTERS.

THE SAYING IS ALSO PART OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, AND IS FOUND IN MATTHEW 6:24.

THERE WE HEAR HOW OUR DUTY OR DEVOTION CANNOT BE SPLIT, BECAUSE WHEN IT IS, WE INEVITABLY WILL FAIL TO REMAIN LOYAL TO ONE OR THE OTHER MASTER.

SO PURITY OF HEART IS NOT ABOUT SIMPLY ACTING OR SPEAKING IN RELIGIOUS WAY.

RATHER IT CONCERNS OUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS GOD- IT IS TO GIVE OUR HEART TO GOD, TO PUT "NO OTHER GODS" BEFORE THE LORD.

THE NEXT BLESSING JESUS OFFERED WAS THE BENEFITS OF BEING A PEACEMAKER.

WE SHOULD NOTE THAT MAKING PEACE IS NOT THE SAME THING AS BEING A PEACEKEEPER.

THE LATTER IS MORE OF A PASSIVE ROLE, WHILE THE FORMER CONVEYS THE SENSE OF DELIBERATE ACTION.

PEACE, IN THE BIBLICAL MEANING OF THE WORD, IS MORE THAN THE ABSENCE OF STRIFE, IT INCLUDES- OVER ALL WELLBEING OF BODY, MIND, AND SOUL.

THUS TO BE A PEACEMAKER IS TO SEEK ANOTHER'S HEALING, TO TRY TO LESSEN STRESS, AS WELL AS TO TRY TO RECONCILE RELATIONSHIPS.

FINALLY, WE TURN TO THE BLESSINGS OF BEING PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE.

THIS IS A BLESSING MOST PEOPLE UNDERSTANDABLY WOULD BE HAPPY TO MISS OUT ON.

AND ACTUALLY, OF ALL THE BEATITUDES IT IS THE ONE WE OUGHT NOT TO PURSUE.

AND YET IT IS ONE WE MAY VERY WELL HAVE TO FACE IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER AS CHRISTIANS.

THE THING TO REMEMBER IS WHEN WE SUFFER IN ANY WAY FOR LIVING OUT OUR FAITH, IT IS NOT A SIGN OF GOD'S DISFAVOR.

INSTEAD IT IS A CONSEQUENCE OF SEEKING TO PROMOTE THE GROWTH OF GOD'S KINGDOM ON EARTH.

THOSE WHO SUFFER FOR THEIR FAITH ARE BLESSED BECAUSE IT WILL NOT BE IN VAIN.

ULTIMATE VICTORY IS OURS BECAUSE JESUS NOT ONLY DIED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE-HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD.

HIS VICTORY IS OUR VICTORY .THEREFORE, THOSE WHO PERSECUTE CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS DO SO IN VAIN, BECAUSE THEY MAY WIN SOME BATTLES, BUT NOT THE WAR.

THERE IS A FINAL STORY I'D LIKE TO SHARE, WHICH COVERS NOT ONLY PERSECUTION, BUT MEEKNESS, MERCY AND INDEED, IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, ALL THE BEATITUDES.

THIS IS ABOUT A CHRISTIAN WOMAN WHO LIVED IN RUSSIA UNDER THE REIGN OF TERROR IMPOSED BY STALIN.

THIS INCLUDED STALIN'S CRACKDOWN ON ALL RELIGION IN THE SOVIET UNION. MANY WHO RESISTED HIM WERE SENT TO PRISON.

BUT THIS WOMAN NAMED MARIA YUDINA, WHO WAS A WELL KNOWN PIANIST, AS WELL AS A MUSIC TEACHER, OPENLY DEFIED THE GOVERNMENT POLICY.

SHE DID SO BY NOT HIDING HER CHURCH ATTENDANCE, AND BY CORRESPONDING WITH THEOLOGIANS IN SPITE OF THE THREAT OF ENDING UP IN THE GULAG.

MARIE ALSO CONTINUED TO PERFORM IN PUBLIC AND ON THE RADIO.

ONE NIGHT STALIN WAS SO MOVED BY HER PERFORMANCE OF MOZART'S PIANO CONCERTO NO. 23, HE ASKED FOR A RECORDING OF THE RADIO PROGRAM.

THE RECORD WAS MADE AN SENT TO HIM. STALIN RESPONDED WITH A HANDWRITTEN NOTE THAT INCLUDED 20,000 RUBLES.(APPROX. 3-4 HUNDRED DOLLARS TODAY.)

YUDINA WROTE BACK TO HIM: "I THANK YOU JOSEPH, FOR YOUR AID. I WILL PRAY FOR YOU DAY AND NIGHT, AND ASK THE LORD TO FORGIVE YOUR GREAT SINS BEFORE THE PEOPLE AND THE COUNTRY.

THE LORD IS MERCIFUL AND HE'LL FORGIVE YOU. I GAVE THE MONEY TO THE CHURCH I ATTEND."

UPON RECEIPT OF HER LETTER STALIN ORDERED AN ARREST WARRANT BE DRAWN UP, BUT REMARKABLY HE NEVER SIGNED THE ORDER.

IT IS ALSO SAID THAT HE WAS LISTENING TO THE RECORD OF HER PERFORMANCE RIGHT BEFORE HE DIED.

WHETHER IT WAS MERELY HER MUSIC THAT MOVED HIM, ONLY GOD KNOWS.

BUT WE CAN LOOK TO MARIA YUDINA FOR AN EXAMPLE OF A WOMAN WHO KNEW HAD SHE RECEIVED GOD'S GRACE, AND WAS MOVED TO SHARE IT EVEN WITH A MAN WHO WAS HER ENEMY.

MAY OUR HEARTS AND MINDS BE OPEN TO THE SPIRIT'S TRANSFORMATION SO OUR ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES MAY GLORIFY OUR SAVIOR, AND WITNESS TO GOD'S LOVE. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY MATTHEW 5:1-12

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