

## 18.07.2020 SEEING PEOPLE THROUGH JESUS' EYES

### *Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men' Matthew 4:19*

No-one is beyond the reach of God's everlasting love. He draws every human being to Him with cords of love and if we do not resist His drawing, we shall rejoice in Him as the God of our salvation and Christ Jesus as the Saviour of the world. Christ died so that the whole world through Him might be saved. Every human being is precious in His sight.

During Jesus ministry He constantly had to teach His disciples and the Jewish people that He had come to save all mankind. From the days of Abraham and Moses He had told the Jews that though He had chosen them in particular; they were chosen in order to be a blessing to all nations. They were to be a witness to His Name and bring the nations to a knowledge of Him, the true God, the Creator and Redeemer of the world.

But the Jews soon forgot. They saw themselves as superior to the rest of the world (the Gentiles). And then, though they claimed to be different from the heathen, they soon followed their ways of setting up social barriers within their own society.

When it came to sin, they forgot that every sin is heinous to God and set up a 'hierarchy' of sins and sinners. So publicans, tax collectors and harlots were great sinners, but those guilty of pride and self-righteousness were not.

During His ministry Jesus addressed all forms of bigotry – both spiritual and social. By His words and actions He revealed the unconditional love of God to both perpetrator and victim. The goodness of God that He revealed drew many to repentance. But there were those among the Jews who would not respond to His drawing.

### **The Second Touch**

*Then He came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to Him, and begged Him to touch him. So He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town. And when He had spit on his eyes and put His hands on him, He asked him if he saw anything. And he looked up and said, "I see men like trees, walking." Then He put His hands on his eyes again and made him look up. And he was restored and saw everyone clearly. Then He sent him away to his house, saying, "Neither go into the town, nor tell anyone in the town." Mark 8:22-26*

The background to this story is that the scribes and Pharisees were accusing Jesus of not following the traditions of Judaism, especially that of ritual purification with regard to things and people (cleansing after association with Gentiles). Jesus replied, *"Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."* Matthew 15:11

Jesus' response offended the Pharisees and the disciples were afraid about this and spoke to Jesus. *"Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?"* Matthew 15:12

Jesus replied, *"Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch...Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."* Matthew 15:14-20

Then Jesus provided them with object lessons. He did 3 miracles for Gentiles – the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter, feeding the 4000 and the miracle of healing the blind man.

Jesus could have healed the blind man immediately once for all. But He wanted the disciples to understand their own blindness. They could not see clearly the mission of Christ because they were blinded by the traditions of their fathers. They needed a second touch too. They needed spiritual vision.

For Reflection: How is it with us? Do we need spiritual vision too? This is how Jesus described those who had sight but no spiritual vision:

*'Hearing you will hear and not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive. For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears. Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'* Matthew 13:14, 15

## **A Lesson in Acceptance**

*He left Judea and departed again to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria. John 4:3, 4*

The usual route to Galilee from Jerusalem did not pass through Samaria. But Jesus 'needed' to go there for He had an appointment with a woman who was an outcast on multiple levels – she was a Samaritan, a woman, an immoral woman.

For Jesus to have dealings with this woman was to risk ritual defilement (John 4:9). There was indeed a difference between Jew and Samaritan, and the truth of Judaism over against that of the Samaritans is confirmed by Jesus (John 4:22). But the hatred and the alienation are not accepted by Christ. The Samaritans do in fact offer worship, though they are in ignorance of the one they worship. But the one they desire to worship wants their worship and comes to them, revealing Himself and bringing salvation. Like the world (John 3:16-18), the Samaritans are worthy of condemnation and yet are loved.

Jesus tells the woman He is superior to Jacob and the water He offers is superior too, for it is the water of Life. He declares Himself as the Messiah to her, this woman who was an outcast in the eyes of the world.

*The woman then left her water pot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him. John 4:28-30*

Those who have the Spirit of Christ will see all men through the eyes of divine compassion. No matter what may be the social position, no matter what his wealth or how high his education, if a man is in Christ, he will not be unkind, uncourteous, hard-hearted, and merciless. Since every soul is entirely dependent upon God for every blessing he enjoys, how patient, how merciful, we should be to every creature. God looked upon man in his lost condition, in his degradation and guilt, and paid the same price for the ransom of the poor and the outcast that he paid to ransom the rich with all his intrusted talents. There is no respect of persons with God. *Signs of the Times.20.06.1892*

For Reflection: As we look at this example of how Jesus met social outcasts, we need to ask ourselves whether we have the mind of Jesus in dealing with social outcasts of our 21<sup>st</sup> century society. Or, like the Jews of old, are we guilty of the sins of spiritual pride, condemnation and indifference to the plight of people in our community?

## **Begin Where You Are**

When Jesus gave His commission to the disciples He asked them to wait for the Holy Spirit and then to start witnessing locally, in Jerusalem. In His own ministry, we find that Jesus first 'went to His own'; to Galilee and Jerusalem before He ministered to Gentiles.

There are many Christians who will never travel far, perform great miracles or have a world-wide ministry. For them, the example of the disciple Andrew will have particular meaning. Peter Marshall, the Chaplain of the United States Senate in the 1940s, called Andrew 'the saint of the rank and file'.

We often find Andrew, the brother of the volatile Peter, bringing people to Jesus. He was the quietly observant disciple.

*One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. John 1:40-42*

*Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little." One of His disciples,*

*Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, "There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish..." John 6:5-9*

*Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. John 12:20-22*

'With the calling of John and Andrew and Simon, of Philip and Nathanael, began the foundation of the Christian church. John directed two of his disciples to Christ. Then one of these, Andrew, found his brother, and called him to the Saviour. Philip was then called, and he went in search of Nathanael. These examples should teach us the importance of personal effort, of making direct appeals to our kindred, friends, and neighbours. There are those who for a lifetime have professed to be acquainted with Christ, yet who have never made a personal effort to bring even one soul to the Saviour... There are many who need the ministrations of loving Christian hearts... Many are waiting to be personally addressed. In the very family, the neighbourhood, the town, where we live, there is work for us to do as missionaries for Christ. If we are Christians, this work will be our delight. *Desire of Ages: p 141*

### **Dealing with Difficult People**

Jesus dealt with 'difficult' people throughout His ministry. He dealt with them with patience, love and grace. He sometimes was silent, sometimes He rebuked. He asked questions and pointed them to Scripture. Whatever His approach, He used grace and truth in all His dealings with people.

We tend to think of difficult people as 'the other person'. But we are all sinners, and therefore, before we knew Christ and were converted, we too were difficult people – enemies of God, full of greed, envy, pride and hate. Some of us remain difficult people even after conversion.

We need to look at every person who is 'difficult' as one who has been redeemed at infinite cost. We need God's Spirit to show us what underlies the person's behaviour and have compassion as Christ had compassion for every sinner He came in contact with. The Apostle Paul says that after conversion, because we have experienced the love of God, we should look upon every human being as a son or daughter of God.

We should have a special burden for 'difficult' people, because they are often unhappy people. We should ask the Lord to use us by His Spirit to minister the grace and love of God to them. It will take us out of our comfort zones, but 'all things are possible by His Spirit.

*We are ruled by the love of Christ, now that we recognize that one man died for everyone, which means that they all share in his death. He died for all, so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but only for him who died and was raised to life for their sake. No longer, then, do we judge anyone by human standards. 2 Corinthians 5:14-16.*

*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honour giving preference to one another. Romans 12:10*

### **Sensing Providential Opportunities**

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles abounds with stories of the Holy Spirit's providential leading in the early church. From this book we learn that not only did the Spirit lead, but that the Apostles and disciples in the early church actively sought His guidance and listened to His voice.

In the world today, many speak of having a sixth sense or being led by a voice or depending on unusual circumstances for guidance. But in this age where the Devil wants to deceive even God's people if it were possible, we must be certain that we are being led by the Holy Spirit.

This certainty comes from having daily communion with the Holy Spirit (*'may the communion and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you' 2 Corinthians 13:14*). He communes with our spirits and we become so accustomed to His voice that we listen and are led to many providential opportunities to witness for Christ.

*So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. And when they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. Acts 13:4, 5*

*Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened to me by the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit...but taking my leave of them, I departed for Macedonia. 2 Corinthians 2:12, 13*

*Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. Acts 16:6*

*Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot." Acts 8:26-29*

**'An angel guided Philip to the one who was seeking for light and who was ready to receive the gospel, and today angels will guide the footsteps of those workers who will allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify their tongues and refine and ennoble their hearts.** The angel sent to Philip could himself have done the work for the Ethiopian, but this is not God's way of working. It is His plan that men are to work for their fellow men.' *Acts of the Apostles p. 109*

#### **Conclusion:**

In God's sight the souls of all men are of equal value. He "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us." Without distinction of age, or rank, or nationality, or religious privilege, all are invited to come unto Him and live. "Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference." "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free." "The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the Maker of them all." "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." Acts 17:26, 27; Galatians 3:28; Proverbs 22:2; Romans 10:11-13. *Desire of Ages: p 403*

*Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, "The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." Matthew 9:35-38*

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