**The Imitation of Christ by Thomas A. Kempis**

**BOOK TWO:** THE INTERIOR LIFE

**Chapter 3 Part 3:** Goodness and Peace in Man

**Quote:**

"Behold, how far you are from true charity and humility which does not know how to be angry with anyone, or to be indignant save only against self! It is no great thing to associate with the good and gentle, for such association is naturally pleasing. Everyone enjoys a peaceful life and prefers persons of congenial habits. But to be able to live at peace with harsh and perverse men, or with the undisciplined and those who irritate us, is a great grace, a praiseworthy and manly thing. Some people live at peace with themselves and with their fellow men, but others are never at peace with themselves nor do they bring it to anyone else. These latter are a burden to everyone, but they are more of a burden to themselves. A few, finally, live at peace with themselves and try to restore it to others. Now, all our peace in this miserable life is found in humbly enduring suffering rather than in being free from it. He who knows best how to suffer will enjoy the greater peace, because he is the conqueror of himself, the master of the world, a friend of Christ, and an heir of heaven."

**Concept and Scripture:**

It is best to experience the love of God rather than being worshipped by other people.

John 13:34-35

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.  If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. **5**It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

**Discussion:**

How does experiencing God’s love inspire us vs. being accepted by others limit us?

How is experiencing God’s love fulfilling; whereas, seeking the acceptance of others is exhausting?

**Concept and Scripture:**

To live in peace with those that irritate us, we must set and maintain healthy boundaries (self-control).

 1 Corinthians 13:4 – 7 (ESV)

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Galatians 5:13 (NLT)

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don’t use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.

**Discussion:**

How does the way you set boundaries for yourself impact how you set boundaries with other people?

How do the Ten Commandments help us in setting boundaries with ourselves and other people?

**Concept and Scripture:**

When we humble ourselves before God, we become of greater value to ourselves and others.

Matthew 7:12

“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Philippians 3:8

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.

Proverbs 12:22

Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight

Jeremiah 18:1-6

This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: “Go down to the potter’s house, and there I will give you my message.” So I went down to the potter’s house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.

Then the word of the Lord came to me. He said, “Can I not do with you, Israel, as this potter does?” declares the Lord. “Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, Israel. If at any time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be uprooted, torn down and destroyed, and if that nation I warned repents of its evil, then I will relent and not inflict on it the disaster I had planned. And if at another time I announce that a nation or kingdom is to be built up and planted,  and if it does evil in my sight and does not obey me, then I will reconsider the good I had intended to do for it.

**Discussion:**

Why does God choose to work through the hearts of people rather than money?

How does getting paid to perform a service impact a person’s attitude vs. volunteering to help other people in need?

What can you do with a pure heart attitude that you cannot do with money?

**Concept and Scripture:**

As sinners, separated from God, we are our own greatest enemies because we are neither at peace with ourselves or others. By conquering ourselves through our relationship with Jesus Christ we master the world and become an heir of heaven.

## Isaiah 59:8

## They do not know the way of peace,

## And there is no justice in their tracks,

## They have made their paths crooked,

## Whoever treads on them does not know peace.

## Jeremiah 6:14

## “They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially,

## Saying, ‘Peace, peace,’

## But there is no peace.

**Discussion:**

## What is the correlation between peace and justice?

## Can we achieve peace and justice without God? Why/why not?