

Jesus and The Power of Gentleness

Because music is a universal language, especially for the soul, gospel songs have a popularity and usefulness to reaching to the heart of our being. Here is a favorite gospel song that I am sure you will find familiar and speaks to our theme today...

His Eye Is On The Sparrow

Why should I feel discouraged, why should the shadows come,
Why should my heart be lonely, and long for heav'n and home,
When Jesus is my portion? My constant Friend is He:
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

Refrain:

I sing because I'm happy, I sing because I'm free,
For His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

"Let not your heart be troubled," His tender word I hear,
And resting on His goodness, I lose my doubts and fears;
Though by the path He leadeth, but one step I may see;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

Whenever I am tempted, whenever clouds arise,
When songs give place to sighing, when hope within me dies,
I draw the closer to Him, from care He sets me free;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me;
His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.

When we think of God's Spirit and our spiritual nature I think of a particular verse that we have been using in this series...

Galatians 5:22-23 - "But the spiritual nature produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **gentleness**, and self-control. There are no laws against things like that."

Today I wish to focus on Gentleness. There are two signs in the Gospel of John that, I believe, highlight this aspect of the ministry of Jesus. The third sign is the "Healing at the Pool of Bethesda" and the sixth sign, "Healing the man born blind". Both of these are executed with a powerful gentleness that displays the wonderful grace and compassion of God.

GENTLENESS

Healing at the Pool of Bethesda - [John 5:1-15]

Later, Jesus went to Jerusalem for a Jewish festival. 2) Near Sheep Gate in Jerusalem was a pool called Bethesda in Hebrew. It had five porches. 3) Under these porches a large number of sick people—people who were blind, lame, or paralyzed—used to lie. 5) One man, who had been sick for 38 years, was lying there. 6) Jesus saw the man lying there and knew that he had been sick for a long time. So Jesus asked the man, "Would you like to get well?" 7) The sick man answered Jesus, "Sir, I don't have anyone to put me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I'm trying to get there, someone else steps into the pool ahead of me." 8) Jesus told the man, "Get up, pick up your cot, and walk." 9) The man immediately became well, picked up his cot, and walked. That happened on a day of worship. 10) So the Jews told the man who had been healed, "This is a day of worship. You're not allowed to carry your cot today." 11) The man replied, "The man who made me well told me to pick up my cot and walk." 12) The Jews asked him, "Who is the man who told you to pick it up and walk?" 13) But the man who had been healed didn't know who Jesus was. (Jesus had withdrawn from the crowd.) 14) Later, Jesus met the man in the temple courtyard and told him, "You're well now. Stop sinning so that something worse doesn't happen to you." 15) The man went back to the Jews and told them that Jesus was the man who had made him well.

There are no laws that enforce nor prevent the compassion of God, imaged in this story by Jesus. Gentility, by definition is, "elegance by virtue of fineness of manner and expression". God, we might say, is virtuous in word and in action. The elegance of this sign portrays Gentleness as the true Spirit of God and, as followers of Jesus, Gentleness should be part of our character as well in word and deed.

Healing The Man Born Blind - [John 9:1-41]

Because this story takes all of 41 verses in the 9th chapter of John, I will try to summarize it here....

Jesus was walking one day with his disciples and saw **a man born blind**. His disciples ask, "Rabbi, why was this man born blind? Did he or his parents sin?" Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned. Instead, **he was born blind so that God could show what he can do for him**. Jesus told them that he was "light for the world" and his work was to bring enlightenment. Jesus then proceeded to **"spit on the ground and mixed the spit with dirt. Then he smeared it on the man's eyes and told him, "Wash it off in the pool of Siloam."** The blind man washed it off and returned. **He was able to see."**

His neighbors, who previous saw him begging, asked "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?" Because some were not sure they asked the man and he said "I am the one". So they asked him, "How did you receive your sight?" He then told them about how Jesus had brought about his healing. This created even more questions and arguments among the Pharisees when they heard about it. The deliberation went on for some time about who Jesus was and how he might have done this until the man who was blind was questioned. The man responded, "I don't know if he's a sinner or not. But I do know one thing. I used to be blind, but now I can see." We are then told, "The Jews answered him, **"You were born full of sin. Do you think you can teach us?" Then they threw him out of the synagogue."**

Jesus heard that the Jews had thrown the man out of the synagogue. So when Jesus found the man, he asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The man bowed in front of Jesus and said, "I believe, Lord." "Then Jesus said, "I have come into this world to judge: Blind people will be given sight, and those who can see will become blind." Some Pharisees who were with Jesus heard this. So they asked him, "Do you think we're blind?" Jesus told them, **"If you were blind, you wouldn't be sinners. But now you say, 'We see,' so you continue to be sinners."**

This Sign of Jesus, healing the man born blind, clearly signifies the reality of **Sin as arrogance**. The meaning of arrogant is, **"having or showing feelings of unwarranted importance out of overbearing pride"** according to the dictionary. Self-importance is often the character of religious people even to this day. The word used here in the Greek for "sin" is "harmartia" which literally means "missing the mark". We are way off target, so to speak, when we act with arrogance and unwarranted self-importance.

These two miracles, as they are popularly called, remind us clearly of the Gentleness of the Gospel that this Gospel is trying to portray. He tells, when Jesus is speaking with Nicodemus, that **God is a Spirit and that our relationship with God must be in "spirit and in truth"**. Our "worship" [worship - a feeling of profound love and admiration] is profound [profound - coming from deep within one] when we relate to God in "spirit" not in "facts" [fact - a concept whose truth can be proved]. **Truth is not lacking in fact but is much more profound than fact alone.**

This is why the author of John's Gospel speaks to us in story, metaphor, allegory, and myth. Jesus, when he was teaching, often spoke to the people in parables. This is because, as many have said, **"We are not human beings learning to be spiritual; we are spiritual beings learning to be human."** It is similar to becoming a doctor, after learning all the necessary medical facts, needs to "practice" medicine to be a good doctor. **Jesus was trying to teach us to become human beings as God intended from the beginning of creation.**

So far the "signs" we have looked at have shown us the inclusiveness of God's love. Using the list of the fruits of spiritual beings from Galatians we have tried to list the inclusiveness of God's spirit with our spirits with love being the key. God's presence is with us in our.....

- Joy: The Wedding At Cana in Galilee
- Peace: Healing of the Official's son, in the Roman government
- Patience: The Samaritan Woman at the Well, not of the Jewish faith
- Kindness & Goodness: Jesus Feeds the 5000+
- Faithfulness: Jesus Walks on Water to the aid of his disciples in a boat
- Gentleness: Jesus heals a man after 38 years and a man born blind
- Self-Control: Jesus raises Lazarus from death (to be continued next)

Jesus teaches us how to become human using our spiritual gifts.

A modern version of a very old blessing may sum up this homily well.... May the caring peace of God that goes beyond human comprehension, declare God's love for you in your heart and mind as we see it in Jesus Christ; and may the blessing of God, loving Creator, gracious Liberator, and life giving Spirit keep you steadfast now and always. Amen.