

Resources for your News

Sunday, 3 September 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 16:21-27

1. Short-term loss is sometimes necessary for long-term gain, as a student studying, or an athlete training, can testify. When have you found that denying yourself proved to be worthwhile because of what you gained afterwards?
2. Jesus was teaching his followers that the path of discipleship would involve pain and suffering. Peter would have none of it. When have you found that taking up your cross brought you life, even though at the time it may have been difficult?
3. Jesus knew that because his good news message was not acceptable to the authorities he would suffer and die. In spite of this he trusted that the power of God would overcome evil. Have you seen a good news message survive even though opponents tried to stifle it?
4. Jesus promised that those who suffer for the kingdom would be rewarded. Perhaps, even in this earthly life, you have experienced reward for faithful discipleship. What have these rewards been?

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MUSINGS

To deny oneself is to be aware only of Christ and no more of self, to see only him who goes before and no more the road which is too hard for us.

When Christ calls a person, he bids them come and die.

The disciple-community does not shake off sorrow as though it were no concern of its own, but willingly bears it. And in this way they show how close are the bonds which bind them to the rest of humanity. But at the same time they do not go out of their way to look for suffering, or try to contract out of it by adopting an attitude of contempt and disdain. They simply bear the suffering which comes their way as they try to follow Jesus Christ, and bear it for *his* sake. Sorrow cannot tire them or wear them down, it cannot embitter them or cause them to break down under the strain; far from it, for they bear their sorrows in the strength of him who bears them up, who bore the whole suffering of the world upon the cross. They stand as the bearers of sorrow in the fellowship of the Crucified: they stand as strangers in the world in the power of him who was such a stranger to the world that it crucified him.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Sunday, 10 September 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 18:15-20

1. At the time Matthew was writing his gospel local church communities would have numbered no more than fifty people. They would be known to one another. Matthew presents the instructions of Jesus for dealing with people whose behaviour disrupted and harmed the community. Note the steps suggested. Simple directions, but many of us do otherwise. We avoid difficult confrontations. We talk about the faults of others to everyone but themselves. We go over the head of someone who displeases us and make complaints. In your experience, which approach is life-giving for you and for others?
2. While Jesus is referring to a group situation, the advice can be applied also to personal difficulties and problems with others. What lessons has life taught you about constructive ways of dealing with conflict?
3. As individuals and communities we have the power to bind and to loose, to exclude people from relationship, or to open up and include others in relationship. When have you found it important to acknowledge this power in your own life?
4. Jesus also promises to be with his followers when they gather together. What does that mean to you? How have you experienced the presence of Jesus in his followers gathered together?

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MUSINGS

Opening ourselves to ideas, including those with which we disagree, this is what the good traveller should do. Happy are they who understand the words, 'If you disagree with me you have something to give me.'

If those who are with you always agree with you before you open your mouth, they are not companions but shadows. When disagreement is not a form of systematic blocking, when it arises from a different vision, it can only enrich us.

It is possible to travel alone. But the good traveller knows that the journey is human life, and life needs company. 'Companion' means, etymologically, the person who eats the same bread. Happy are they who feel they are always on the road and that every person they meet is their companion. The good traveller takes care of his weary companions. He guesses when they lose heart. He takes them as he finds them, listens to them. Intelligently, gently, above all lovingly, he encourages them to go on and recover their joy in the journey.

Dom Helder Camara, *Essential Writings*,
Modern Spiritual Masters Series

Sunday, 17 September 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 18:21-35

1. Jesus surprised Peter by telling him he needed to forgive seventy-seven times. Perhaps you have known the truth of this when something reminds you of a past hurt and you find you need in your heart to forgive again the person who hurt you. What was this like for you? How has a capacity to have a forgiving heart helped you?
2. Sometimes we need to forgive ourselves for things we regret about past behaviour. What happens to you when you cannot do this? How has your ability to forgive yourself for past mistakes influenced your attitude towards yourself now?
3. Are there people whose ability to forgive has inspired you? Recall them and the forgiveness they showed and give thanks for their example.

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MUSINGS

Just as the Son, on coming into the world and becoming man, chose people's company to the point of joining sinners at table, so the Church has to keep the same company, because her faith, her adherence to the Lord and to the Word she receives from him, does not remove her from the world, but demands that she live in the company of men and women ...

'Company' means wanting to reach people where they are, including in their sinfulness and their refusal of God; it means meeting people with sympathy and love, because 'Christ died for us *while* we were still sinners (Rm 5:8) and 'reconciled us to God *while* we were enemies' (Rm 5:10). The importance of the word 'while' needs to be underlined: the presence, all at the very same time, of the world's hatred, the enmity of sinners and the love of God is an essential part of the word of the cross. Christ has broken the logic of enmity, and so Christians live 'company' when they follow him in breaking down barriers, walls and borders, contradicting every day the logic that creates and perceives enemies ...

The 'company' of others implies being patient with them, it implies longsuffering, the capacity to remain in a position of support ... participating in the patience of God. And so, Christians are precluded from every attitude ... that would harden them in the logic that divides people into allies, friends and enemies.

Enzo Bianchi, *Christians in Society* [transl. Ed]

Sunday, 24 September 2017

SEEING YOUR LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPELS

Matthew 20:1-16

1. 'I was there first'. Envy easily comes to the surface when faced with the good fortune of others, especially when compared to what seems less favourable treatment of ourselves. Can you recall that feeling in yourself and what it did to you? Can you also recall times when you were content with your lot, even though it seemed others had greater gifts, better opportunities, etc.
2. A parent or teacher who gives a lot of time to a difficult child does not love the others less, but if we are one of those other children we may not see that. Recall a 'Jesus person' in your life who helped you to overcome feelings of envy and helped you appreciate that the apparently more favourable treatment of another did not mean a lessening of love for you.
3. This leads us to the core message of this parable, namely, that God's love is a free gift and not earned. Recall moments when you were particularly conscious of the gifts that God has given you by counting all the blessings that you have, no matter how small.
4. 'It is too late now' are words sometimes uttered to justify doing nothing about a situation. This parable tells us that where love is involved, it is never too late. Can you recall times when you got a positive response after taking action when you thought it was 'too late'?

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MUSINGS

I should like to speak with you, my God, and yet what else can I speak of but you? Indeed, could anything at all exist which had not been present with you from all eternity, which didn't have its true home and most intimate explanation in your mind and heart? Isn't everything I ever say really a statement about you?

On the other hand, if I try, shyly and hesitantly, to speak to you about yourself, you will still be hearing about *me*. For what could I say about you except that you are *my* God, the God of my beginning and end, God of my joy and my need, God of my life?

... But what am I really saying, when I call you *my* God, the God of my life? That you are the meaning of my life? The goal of my wanderings? The consecration of my actions? The judgment of my sins? The bitterness of my bitter hours and my most secret joy? My strength, which turns *my own* strength into weakness? Creator, Sustainer, Pardoner, the One both far and near? Incomprehensible? God of my brethren? God of my fathers?

Are there any titles which I needn't give you? And when I have listed them all, what have I said? If I should take my stand on the shore of your endlessness and shout into the trackless reaches of your Being all the words I have ever learned in the poor prison of my little existence, what should I have said? I should never have spoken the last word about you.

Karl Rahner, *Encounters With Silence*