

Tuesday, December 5, 2006

WHY LOVING GOD MUST COME FIRST

We have it backward. To listen to many today, Jesus said the great Commandment is to love our Neighbor and the second Commandment is to love God. Worse than that, increasingly we hear, never mind God, (We can't agree about Him, We get bogged down in Theology and Religion. These are obstacles.) The only thing that really matters is to love our neighbor. And "neighbor", these days, is understood to be the poor and homeless. What really matters is loving the marginalized, meaning providing for their perceived needs. This is what Jesus was all about. This is what the Gospel is all about. This is what being a true Christian is all about. No, no, no! Let's get the correct order. Jesus said the first commandment is to love God and to do that with all our heart, soul and mind. The second commandment is to love our neighbors as though they were ourselves. God first. Neighbors second. And "neighbor" here is not defined as the poor and homeless, but anyone who, literally in Old English, nearby dwells (or, simply, the people around us) They might be poor or rich. Much is made today about the need for Christians to become true disciples of Jesus. That is often intended to mean someone who serves the poor. A "disciple" is, by Jesus' definition, a Believer who learns to obey all his commandments. (Matt 28:19-20) A Disciple of Christ is a Believer in Christ who obeys the first Commandment to love God with all heart, soul and mind. And, secondarily, a Believer who goes on to love other human beings. Both are essential and the order is essential.

We can only know who we are as human beings vis-à-vis (face to face, in relation to) God. We Image Him. That is what makes us human. If we do not know Him, we can not know ourselves, our Humanity. We will always wonder, "Who am I?" "What am I?" and be unable to answer truth-fully. We can only know the meaning and purpose of our lives vis-à-vis God. We can only know Truth vis-à-vis God. We can only know what ethics and morality are supposed to be vis-à-vis God. We can only know how to live vis-à-vis God. We can only have the ability to live vis-à-vis God. This is why the Commandment to love God is, and must remain, first. We can not truly love others (including ourselves) if it is not first. I become greatly saddened when I see well-meaning, professed Believers in Christ gradually become completely secularized in the name of following Jesus and serving the poor. We must first, and always, be God-centered and saturated people, loving Him with our whole mind and heart. And that includes loving Truth and Doctrine that comes from Him. It is the knowledge we get from our relationship with God that informs us as how we can best love our neighbors. And that love for neighbors will always include introducing them, in turn, to the love of God. Failing that, we fail to truly love them, even if we give them shelter and clothes.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:23