

Self Righteousness

4.24.25

Lord, please teach us your ways of love, hope, and respect for the little ones, the broken, and those who are not chosen, not wanted, not loved, but set aside. Amen.

My dear family, coming to serve the Lord requires a life of sacrifice, because things on this earth will never be perfect as they are in heaven. So, we must continually adjust our expectations to accommodate the Lord's heart for the poor and disadvantaged. Some folks who come here from a different culture, such as Europe, Australia, or the Orient, had a good upbringing with intelligent and caring parents. They see the world from their tidy little middle class perspective and can be critical and scandalized by the rough lifestyle we embrace with lady poverty.

Jesus was always looking after the poor and the broken, those who didn't measure up to the world's standards, the outcasts. He knew their hearts and the many disappointments they suffered from childhood. Jesus did not come in an impressive carriage like kings and princes do. Rather, He came as the low-income carpenter, turned itinerant minister with a ragtag group of men, equally of lowly estate, simple, smelly fishermen who abandoned their nets to live for God alone, and go fishing for men with a messiah. Even Scripture affirms the rights of the poor, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* Matthew 21:43.

Those of us who grew up in a more privileged circumstance can be critical and judgmental; I ought to know I was one of them and could easily relapse into judging others by their external trappings, clothing, cars, etc. The Lord took me to task very early in my conversion to have a heart for the poor and the disadvantaged. This was a beautiful gift he gave me, reminding me that I could very well have been just like them, and to do for them was to do for him.

We had a visitor one season in the past that had been raised in a very clean and proper culture. Some of the sisters and brothers did not quite measure up to their righteous standards. It just so happened that these brothers and sisters were not all to conscientious middle-class folks. Some of us come from ghettos and poor working class backgrounds. Some are seniors and former alcoholics and drug addicts. This presented many challenges in charity and brotherly love for our visitor, because he was meticulous in his manner, always joining on the spot and first to volunteer. While I have to say, our brothers and sisters sometimes were a little slower. Yet there were very concerning undertones of fault-finding and a lack of flexibility, which especially concerned me when I was cornered with a longer list of extremely petty complaints and suggestions for reform. To be honest, really honest, I was shocked that such little things were offensive to him, and I do mean genuinely shocked. How could we demonstrate the first century ideal and share brotherly love, which often times comes with sacrifice and a price tag.

The very life of St. Francis teaches us to overlook the failings of others and fill in what they are lacking with deeds of charity and to never seek praise or be offended if falsely accused. Why is this so important you ask? Because someday God will have to extend His mercy to us for our many many failings which we're blind to, not the very least of which is judging others. Well one night after I'd been presented with a laundry list of our feelings, I collapsed before the Lord, pleading with Him to help

me, help them, see things in a new light, the light of the first century Christian community, where everyone held things in common and made up for the shortcomings of others.

I began, "Lord, I'm a little ruffled up here. What do I do?" He answered, *"You need to talk to them."* I replied, thinking of the push back, "But I didn't want to get into a fight." He answered, *"I didn't say to fight. I said to talk and discuss and tell him there is something essential missing in his walk with Me, and at the rate he is going, he will go through life without it."*

Then the Lord Jesus addressed him directly, *"My son, worship is not cut and dried. It's not about choosing better songs or building healthy lungs, and it's not about showcasing your voice. These had been criticisms of our worship. It is about touching the hem of My garment, an abject poverty of body, soul, and spirit. Do you remember the story of a woman with an issue of blood? She was ritually unclean and shunned by everyone. She knew her state before Me. Those are the very ones the angels rushed to assist, and My heart just melts when they come to Me. Trouble starts when a soul does not see their very own filth, and yet they are keen to point out and correct the faults of others around them."*

"Most do not see their own filth, because they have learned to make up for it outwardly by appearing virtuous. They have learned how to impress others with religious observances, while adding to a running inventory of their brother's failures and shortcomings. But on that day they will stand naked before me, with their hearts exposed, and I will have to send them to the fires of purgatory to cleanse them from heaven. I would prefer that souls did not have to pass through that fire. Do you think you are ready to stand before me in righteousness, Do you harbor criticism and bitterness against your brothers and sisters? I live in your heart and I can smell what comes into it as well as what goes out. Do you really think you are qualified to pass judgment on my servants?"

"There are many reasons I brought you hear, not the least of which is to learn about brotherly love, compassion and selflessness, never making note of one another's faults, but always finding a way to assist and elevate them in dignity. Here we do not look for an acknowledgment or pout on the back when one has extended themselves on behalf of others who are not so well equipped for life. Every gift you have came from Me. Every advantage you have was arranged by Me. If I remove those qualities from your life, where do you think you would stand? It is a grave offense of pride to compare yourself to others. You know nothing about who they really are and where they came from, nor do you know their struggles and heartaches. Some were crack babies, children of prostitutes, mentally challenged, or former alcoholics and addicts. As you mature and discover more about yourself, you will gladly seek out the lowest place and never raise your eyes to examine another's worthiness."

"So, many religious people go through a very serious shock when they see how I weigh them in the balance, not on the world scales, but on mine. I do not say these things to hurt you. I say them so you will not be accused of the sin of self-righteousness, which carries a very severe sentence. Why? Because your thoughts and actions degraded and weakened my children who are already struggling against crushing guilt and self-condemnation. You do not have to say it. Their spirit already knows it. Yes, by your fault -finding you assist the accusers team."

"I love you tenderly and unconditionally, and I will always be by your side. Your perfection is the work of My spirit, and I give greater gifts to those who recognize themselves as of no account. That is the

safest place for all of you, and when I see you standing in line as the last one to be seated, I rejoice and call you up higher."