

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Sep 21st 2018

Feast of Saint Matthew, Apostle and evangelist

What If I Have Trouble Getting Better?

In this troubled world, it is so easy to become frustrated and depressed. There is so much evil and injustice everywhere we look. We can easily slip into hopelessness, believing that everything is out of control and that there is nothing we can do about it. We are not God, so how could we possibly make a difference?

While it may be easy to simply “give up”, in his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul strongly refutes that “give up” argument, that “give up” state of mind. We have each been called by our Lord and Savior “.....to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

But what does that life really look like? Paul reminds us that it requires a focus away from ourselves toward others – “.....with ALL humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love ...”. That certainly is a tall order, at least considering some of the people in my life. But why is loving others so important? It is simple, we are not called to fix all the world’s problems, but rather to get back to the basic directive, the basic purpose of our lives, to point people to Christ. To enhance the unity of our brothers and sisters in Christ as we help them see Christ.

That noble purpose often proves exceedingly challenging with some of the people God has placed in our lives. Yet when we put it into the context of God’s grace given to each of us, it changes the picture immensely. Just consider the fact that the almighty creator of the universe extends his grace to an undeserving sinner like me. That fact is sooo breathtaking that “how could I not extend the same kind of grace to everyone in my life?”

Yet the problem with me is that I keep losing my focus upon this critical assignment. However, that weak excuse fails to hold up as I look around me every moment of the day. As the Psalm reminds us, even “..... the firmament proclaims his handiwork”. God knows the shortcomings of our ability to stay focused upon what is truly important, so he simply reminds us – constantly, through everything he has created.

So back to the challenges in meeting my calling - Jesus teaches us how to deal with people that can be hard to love. Matthew was a corrupt tax collector. Could anyone love and extend grace to someone who routinely cheated poor families out of their resources – the resources they so desperately needed for their very existence. Yet Jesus met Matthew, knowing full well who and what he was, and went to his house that very day for dinner, dinner with all his fellow tax collectors and sinners. If that example of how to respond to fellow sinners were not enough, Jesus powerfully explained his actions “Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, I desire mercy, not sacrifice.”

Mercy, Grace, Love – simple, yet so profound – changing how I respond to my calling – how I need to view ALL those in my life.

Dear Heavenly Father, I have failed you so often in my response to those you have placed in my life. While I could never truly grasp how wide and high and deep is your love and grace, help me to improve my ability to extend that type of grace. You have shown us how important grace and love are for those of us wishing to answer your call. Open my heart and mind - help me to stay focused upon this calling, this purpose for my life.

In the name of Jesus,

Amen

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