Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 62: Being Harvested

Harvesting, or being harvested (continued)?

Day 427: Priorities

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace but a sword! For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies will be the members of his household.

"Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life because of me will find it." (Matthew 10:34-39)

"I, the 'Prince of Peace', am not here to bring peace."

Say what?

Exactly! What's going on here? Now Jesus has diverted His speech to a strange place:

"I am here to bring conflict:

a.) Because of me, families will be torn apart and be enemies against each other.
b.) Whoever does not love me more than they love anyone else, I reject.
c.) Whoever does not embrace their own painful and degrading death on my behalf, I reject.

"In fact, if you 'find yourself' – you are lost. If, however, you lose yourself in Me – you shall find yourself and also find everything."

Why all the conflict? Why this finding and losing?

Has Jesus pivoted from "sending people out to harvest others" to "be harvested?"

Has He?

He was giving His disciples instructions for them to go and share the good news in the surrounding communities. And now, when He states "whoever does not love me more than anyone else, or embrace their own painful and degrading death on my behalf, is not worthy of me…" Just who is He speaking of? His disciples, or those they would be meeting? If He is saying, "you must prioritize Me more than all else," is He speaking to you, or those you meet?

Perhaps ... both?

Indeed. Perhaps He is saying, “What I am asking you to do is very, very hard. You will find much opposition, and cause conflict. For this to work, you must be devoted to Me above anything and all else.”

Are you devoted to Jesus above everything else? Please detail anything you value more than Him. What are the consequences in your life of your priorities?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 428: Receiving God

"Whoever receives you receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives The One who sent Me.

"Whoever receives a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. Whoever receives a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple, I tell you the truth, he will never lose his reward."

When Jesus had finished instructing his disciples, He went on from there to teach and preach in their towns.
(Matthew 10:40-11:1)

Jesus is saying something extremely radical here. If you (going out on Jesus' behalf) are received, He is received. If He is received, God Almighty is received. Therefore…

If I am received, God Almighty is received?

You got it. And … whoever receives you will not receive a prophet's reward, nor a righteous person's reward, nor a disciple's reward, but …

Whoever receives one in the name of God will receive … God's reward??

Yes. Exactly. And they will never lose their reward.

And then Jesus went out and taught and preached in the towns where the disciples were known. There was no hiding now.

When you represent Jesus, you represent God. And you bring God's reward with you. Your purpose is for people to receive God. Looking at the gifts God has blessed you with, and the people He has blessed you with, how are you helping them to receive God? The reward of God is to receive God.

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 429: You figure it out …

Now when John heard in prison about the deeds Christ had done, He sent his disciples to ask a question: "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus answered them, "Go tell John what you hear and see: The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news proclaimed to them — and blessed is anyone who takes no offense at Me!" (Matthew 11:2-6)

Note that Jesus doesn't directly answer John's question. Rather, He says, "These things are happening ... you figure it out."

But know this: "blessed is anyone who is not offended by Me!"

You figure it out. If you do figure it out and choose Me, you will be blessed. Greatly blessed.

Interestingly, Jesus did not try to convert people. He did not try to convince people. He told strange stories, He asked questions, He invited – but He wanted people to figure things out on their own, based on the evidence He provided them.

What evidence of God's kingdom do you provide?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 430: John the Baptist

While they were going away, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Look, those who wear soft clothing are in the palaces of kings! What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet! This is the one about whom it is written: '*Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you*.'

"I tell you the truth, among those born of women, no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is! From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and forceful people lay hold of it. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John appeared. And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, who is to come. The one who has ears had better listen!"
(Matthew 11:7-15)

'*Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you*.'

Malachi, an Old Testament prophet, had declared that God would send a messenger before He came and inaugurated His kingdom. And Jesus is saying, "John the Baptist is that messenger."

And therefore: who is The One who came after John the Baptist?

The one who has ears had better listen.

Jesus wanted people to figure things out – not through supreme intelligence or a specific gift, but rather through experiencing Him and then realizing faith. How would you describe your faith in Jesus? What in your life has led you to that faith?

Share with those you trust.

Day 431: You don't do what we want

"To what should I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces who call out to one another,

"'We played the flute for you, yet you did not dance;
we wailed in mourning, yet you did not weep.'

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look at him, a glutton and a drunk, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." (Matthew 11:16-19)

"You don't do what we want." Jesus heard that a lot, I suspect.

And His response? "Wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

Do what Christ leads you to do.

What is God leading you to? Is it something which will be unexpected or objected to by people who know you? The Holy Spirit is the evangelist, the counselor, the lover-of-people, the witness to Christ and God the Father. Follow the Holy Spirit, so you can see wisdom vindicated by Her deeds.

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 432: Judgement

Then Jesus began to criticize openly the cities in which He had done many of His miracles because they did not repent.

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you! And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be thrown down to Hades! For if the miracles done among you had been done in Sodom, it would have continued to this day. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for the region of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you!" (Matthew 11:20-24)

If you reject the evidence the Heavenly Father gives you, you will face the consequences of your decision.

Jesus is giving a message which will be disturbing to those who believe that God forgives everything and there will be few, if any, consequences for actions.

Jesus came and taught about the Kingdom of God. He demonstrated it in action with many wonderful healings and feedings – and He told people to change from pursuing their own gain, to pursuing God's kingdom (i.e., to repent).

For those who change, He extends the offer of eternal life with the Heavenly Father. For those who don't – He doesn't. This is an uncomfortable message for many: He promises a day of judgement.

I don't like this – I don't want to be judged, nor have those I care for judged.

Many people don't.

Jesus has told us what is important in living our lives. As there will be judgement, are you following Him? Are those you love? What is the healthiest thing you can do for yourself, for them, for God?

Share your notes with those you trust.

Day 433: Rest

Rest, receive nourishment, feed both body and soul. Reflect on the past week and care for your needs (body and spirit). Pray. Dedicate this day to God. Worship! Fill yourself with Light. In the evening get together with a group you trust and share what you would like to from the previous week – good points, hard points, what you've learned, what you've struggled with, etc. Decide again if you wish to continue journeying together or want to stop.

Know that God loves you. Celebrate, Rejoice, Give thanks, talk and walk with God. Be in shalom.