

Doing and Saying – a Christian Pilgrimage

Week 84: Being Vulnerable

Day 581: Confusion

Are you saying that I pursue faith, hope, and love in community (i.e., in the church) as well as on my own?

Yes! I am suggesting you pursue that with others also pursuing it, and you pursue it outside of that immediate community, even pursuing it with others who are working against it.

Ummm... isn't that counter-productive?

It is very counter-intuitive. Yet, it is the way of Christ.

You've lost me again...

When we pray the Lord's Prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," we're not asking just for physical bread, nor even just for all that we physically need. As St. Jerome (translator of the bible into Latin from A.D. 382 to 405) put it, "give us this day our supersubstantial bread." In other words, give us everything we need for life. Give us physical bread, yes, but also give us living bread. Give us bread for today and give us bread for eternity. In other words, "Give us everything we need now and for an eternal life with You, Oh Father."

Ok ...

You remember how Jesus told His disciples to pray for 'helpers for the harvest', and promptly sent them out as harvesters? Or how He told them that if they but prayed with a mustard seed of faith, they could see mountains moved and trees uprooted – and then told them parables about the necessity of working hard without looking for recognition or reward?

Yes...

If we are serious about wanting everything we need from our Father, then our Father will see how we can provide everything we need.

What do you mean?

For us to receive everything we need, God will ask us to provide everything needed.

I'm sorry, but you're speaking in riddles to me.

We feed each other in Christ by honouring the Divine Image of God in each other.

What is everything you need for an eternal life with God? How can you provide that to someone else, someone who knows their need but not how to get it?

Share your thoughts with those you trust.

Day 582: Serving from our Need

To seek the bread for eternity is to first recognize that you need it – and that forces humility, vulnerability, and a quiet dignity. It forces an openness beyond yourself.

It challenges both an arrogance that we are sufficient unto ourselves, (“I don’t need your help!”) and the supposition that the despised (whoever the despised of the day may be) do not also possess the same treasure which just needs uncovering and releasing. It forces a mutuality of recognition and relationship. All are made in the Image of God, to be attached to God, and through that attachment, relate to each other. The expression of our humanity comes through in relationship with God and them, and vice-versa. This is our gift to them, and their gift to us.

When we admit to God that we need God’s help, and request that God fill our need through eternal bread, we defeat God’s purpose if we then try to hold onto that bread greedily for ourselves.

What do you mean?

If we close our hands to grasp the bread we have received, our hands are unable to be open to receive more. However, if they are open to share our bread with others in need, we then have the capability of accepting more in turn from our heavenly Father.

Asking God for our bread requires humility, for it is admitting we cannot create it ourselves. It also requires vulnerability because it requires open hands, from which others may snatch and grab. It generates a quiet dignity, because there is dignity in a dependence which knows its limits and seeks to provide to others through those limits.

When you pray “give us this day our daily bread” you are also praying, “give us what we cannot provide ourselves” and “give us what we can then give others” and finally, “give to others through us, what we all need.” In other words, “let us serve others as you serve us.” There is the dignity of realizing that all of humanity is at the same level, in the same predicament, and we are called to serve each other.

How do you serve others what you need yourself?

Share your exploring with those you trust.

Day 583: Forgiveness

Praying for our daily bread requires us to be vulnerable. Being vulnerable, we will forgive, and we will need to be forgiven.

How do you correlate that?

Asking for forgiveness is asking for healing, for acceptance and restoration. It is not playing it safe or seeking to be “right.” Likewise, forgiving someone means giving up the position of offended victim and risking establishing anew a relationship which has caused hurt. Both are risky, both create vulnerability. Both cases require seeking the Divine Image in the other.

Forgiveness is radical and revolutionary, for it nourishes humanity at its deepest. Forgiveness and forgiving recognize that our humanity is a gift from God, and that God also gifts the other with that same gift. Our daily spiritual bread is often given through the act of forgiveness, which allows us to be humanized by (and humanizes) those whom at the moment we may least want to be associated with. Forgiving and being forgiven are actions which show forth the Image of God, the eternal bread.

Forgiveness is damage-reducing and dignity-inducing. It is the exchange of the bread of life and the bread of truth. To forgive is to display the nature of God, who cannot but help forgive unless He deny His very self. Vulnerability is the essence of forgiveness.

Share your thoughts: how is forgiveness an integral part of our daily bread?

Share with your fellow explorers.

Day 584: Power in Powerlessness

Forgiving someone gives up the power of retribution, of vengeance, even of manipulation through victimhood. Likewise, accepting forgiveness gives up the power of denying healing to what you have wounded, of receiving mercy instead of pushing ego, pride, and control. Forgiving and being forgiven acknowledge the past and its attendant evil, and with humility, sorrow, and grace, turn towards life and the recognition of God in each other, restoring dignity and divinity.

Mutual reconciliation is a sign of the Spirit of God, of the Body of Christ at work. It is a hint of God's future in the present, and so a tasting of the eternal bread.

The act of forgiveness, a very demanding act to provide love to ones' enemy-at-the-moment, is an act of bringing God's future realm into the now, of instantiating God's Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. In this way, this act of powerlessness is one of the most powerful things we can do. Forgiving, and accepting forgiveness, is an act of the divine.

Who do you need to forgive today? Who do you need to be forgiven by? Do you see how Christ's forgiving on the cross, that act of ultimate weakness, was the most powerful act in the history of humanity?

Share your thoughts with your fellow explorers.

Day 585: Faith, Hope, and Love

Being vulnerable in forgiveness makes no worldly sense. However, it makes every sense if you realize that in forgiving you are advancing the future Kingdom of God into the present. It is how you pursue the kingdom of God, even pursuing it when with others who are working against it.

With this understanding, you can have faith in the relationship that will never let you go, the relationship which comes from that future and into the present. You can have hope with the knowledge that the power you use to forgive (and be forgiven) come not from you, but from the Christ, who inhabits the future as well as the present and the past. The love you demonstrate in this act, the seeking of health and healing, is the definition of holiness, the declaring of God's eternal presence into the here and now. In a very real sense, vulnerable forgiveness embraces and emboldens our faith, our hope, and our love. It releases us from anxiety, uncertainty, and despair.

It is an enacting of the prayer for God's name to be hallowed, for God's Kingdom to come, God's will to be done. It is fulfilling the Lord's Prayer.

Read through the Lord's Prayer. How do the acts of forgiving and of being forgiven fulfill the Lord's Prayer?

Share with your fellow explorers.

Day 586: The Holy Celebration, the Holy One-ness

“... the Lord Jesus on the night in which He was betrayed took bread, and after He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way, He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, every time you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, 11:23-26)

“My body is given for you. For forgiveness. My blood is given for you, for a new agreement of unity with the Father. Do this always, until I come again.”

The ultimate act of forgiving was Jesus’ death on the cross. The ultimate act of being forgiven was Jesus ascending and providing the Holy Spirit to all who believe.

When we share Christ’s body and Christ’s blood, we enact a Holy Celebration (Eucharist) which commemorates the instantiation of a Holy One-ness (Communion) with God Almighty, the Forgiving Father. We consume bread and wine not as mere objects, but as living bread, life-giving blood. We consume forgiveness and unity. We consume the Holy Spirit.

Consuming Christ’s body and blood fulfill the Lord’s Prayer: God feeding His people through the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus, establishing the new community of Spirit in which forgiveness is the currency exchanged by all, and common to all equally. It is a community where vulnerability is shared and cherished and shown to be true power. It is a community of holiness, where we serve each other out of our need.

Wow.

Describe what it is like to live in a community where forgiveness is the currency of exchange between all members. Each time you partake of Holy Communion, Holy Eucharist, pray for the realization of that community in your life, and then work towards it. By the power of the Holy Spirit, with prayer and dedication, the mountain can be moved.

Share as you feel appropriate.

Day 587: 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. Love. Pursue what is healthiest. Order your life as one pursuing facilitating as many people as possible to find the Kingdom of God. Be brave, trust God, Love.