

(For Monday, February 13, 2017) **What are you really angry about?**

*“For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come.” (Is.63:4)*

The source of God’s anger always seems to be man’s sin, whether it was Israel’s idolatry of the Golden Calf (See Ex.32:10), or the flea-market in the Temple (See Mt.21:12-13; Mk.11:15-17; Lk.19:45-46; Jn.2:13-17). If sin is anything that distances us from God’s love, then God’s anger is an expression of his unlimited love for us, born out in his determination to do everything possible to keep us close. The Bible says, “Be angry and sin not...” (Eph. 4:24) But Scripture also says that anger is usually inspired NOT by God but by worldly passions (See 2Cor.12:20; Gal.5:20; Eph.4:31;6:4; Col.3:8; 1Tim.2:8) The country seems to be full of angry people right now. But it’s important to search our hearts for the real source of our anger. It’s understandable to be angry when someone hurts us; surely God understands that! And surely unrighteousness must be opposed. But a lot of anger is caused by our taking offense at something someone else has said or done to us. And that’s really just pride talking.

The truth is, it’s really difficult to “be angry and sin not.”

(For Tuesday, February 14, 2017) **What kind of worship does God deserves?**

*“Exalt the LORD our God; worship at his footstool! Holy is he!” (Ps.99:5 –ESV)*

An immense gulf separates the holiness of God from the profane-ness of this world. The Hebrew word for foot, “*regel*” was often used to refer to things not really mentionable in polite company. So, to say that we worship at God’s “footstool” is to describe this present world as something profane and shabby, compared to the exalted holiness of God. Since the rise of humanism, mankind has acquired a rather elevated perception of himself, while man’s perception of God has suffered in consequence. But the truth is, even in the finest worship spaces, with the highest caliber of music, and the most inspired preaching, in this life we will only be able to reach a kind of tattered state of shabby veneration with regard to what would be truly fitting for the Sovereign Lord of all Creation. But Scripture contains the assurance of our hope that one day, you and I will be able to worship Our Lord with all the majesty he deserves.

Until then, all we can do is to worship him to the best of our broken abilities, in Spirit and in truth!

(For Wednesday, February 15, 2017) **How are you perceived by people who aren’t your friends?**

*“Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.”(1Tim.3:7)*

The way people outside the Christian community viewed the members of the church was at the forefront of Paul’s thinking. He mentions this concern five other times in this letter. (See 2:2, 10;5:7, 14;6:1 – *ESV Study Bible* footnote, p.2330, 3:7) How often do we hear of leaders talking “only to their base” or “living in the bubble” of their closest supporters? Yet it’s the unvarnished criticism of those who are not our friends, or the respect accorded us by people we don’t know well which provides the most accurate indicator of how the world see us. Yes, the most important opinion about us will be the one delivered by the King of Heaven when we stand before his throne. But meanwhile, if we care nothing for the opinions of people outside our immediate circle of friends, how can we Christians ever hope to be “the city on the hill” to which others wish to come in order to meet the Lord of Salvation?

(For Thursday, February 16, 2017) **Is fear driving you away from the truth?**

*"...They [the chief priests, scribes, and elders] were afraid of the people for they [the people] all held that John was really a prophet. So they answered Jesus, 'We do not know.'" (Mk.11:32b-33a)*

If these hypocrites had just stopped for a moment to examine their own motives, their lives might have been dramatically changed. Professing they had no position regarding the authenticity of John's Baptism was nonsense. Of course they opposed John's authority because it threatened their own. But fear for their jobs and social position prevented them from answering Jesus because "they were afraid of the crowds." Sometimes, we respond to somebody with the words "I don't know," when we are afraid of causing friction, or disapproval, or opposition. Even though we know the truth, we let fear keep us from speaking it. In fact, sometimes we say "I don't know" to protect ourselves from revealing that we've said or done something that's displeasing to God and contrary to our Christian witness.

What about you? Are you letting "I don't know" drive you away from the truth? Yes, sometimes the truth is inconvenient and uncomfortable. But it's still the truth!

(For Friday, February 17, 2017) **How can you best respond to one who is actively seeking God?**

*"And the scribe said to Jesus, 'You are right teacher...To love him [God] with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.'" (Mk.12:32a,33)*

Here was an honest man, probably a Pharisee who was forthright enough to shed his bigotry and come to Jesus with his questions in earnest. And his honesty allowed this man to realize that the teachings of Jesus were truly faithful to the Law of Moses. In fact, in the next verse, Jesus encourages him by saying, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." Who knows whether this honest man took the final step necessary to enter that Kingdom, by accepting Jesus as The Son of God?

From time to time, you meet good people who have not yet accepted the Christ as Lord and Savior, but who are struggling honestly with the great questions of the faith. The best thing you can do for these seekers is to pray earnestly for them, and to let them see Jesus through you and your living of His grace.