

Looking Away from Self — True Thanksgiving

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“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” This easy to understand, but very difficult verse to obey, is found in Luke 9:62. It has to do with our walk of life, young people, in the midst of this pleasure seeking, lust filled world in which we live. You and I confess Christ, either by our public confession of faith or by the sign of baptism we received. We are, by God’s wonder work of grace in our hearts and lives, marked out as His people. And Almighty God has ordered us to walk as fit citizens of His kingdom, never to take our eyes off Christ, for that would show that we are unfit ploughmen.

To really know and enjoy true thanksgiving with self-denial, we must know Who the King of this kingdom of God is. It is God Himself! If we let Scripture tell us about God, we will stand in awe before Him, we will see ourselves as nothing, and by His grace we shall look away from self and thankfully praise Him now and in all eternity.

We certainly cannot comprehend God. He is incomprehensible. Let us think about some of the following terms and meditate upon the greatness of our God. God is invisible, we cannot approach Him. God is transcendent, we cannot reach out to Him. God is eternal, we are creatures of time. God is infinite, we are finite. God is incomparable, He cannot be classified or defined — think about that! How great is the God of our salvation! How unsearchable He is to our puny little minds. Let’s list some more virtues of God; don’t just skim over these, let them sink deeply into our minds and hearts, because if we don’t know these terms, we don’t know God. Remember, we know God by His Names and virtues, or attributes. God is the unchangeable One — He is Jehovah, the I AM. God is immeasurable, infinitely immense. God is omnipotent, He is all-powerful, He is Lord! God Is light, God is truth, God Is life, God is holiness. God is Triune, He is the Living Covenant God.

Young people, and myself also, how thankful we should be to know and confess that we belong to this Sovereign, Almighty God. It is He that reached down and took us into His covenant fellowship, by the work of Jesus Christ. We are citizens of His kingdom. We should not even dare to “look back” when our “hand is on the plough”, but so often we do. God forgive us all of our sins!

There is blessedness and peace in the way of self-denial. No, the world with all of its enticements will not and cannot give you and me contentment and joy. The more we look to God and know Who He is, the dimmer and less important this world will become to us. Look away from self and look to God and to His Christ; all that He endured on the cross for you and for me. This is self-denial with thanksgiving. If we live before God in the deep awareness of Who He is and what He has done in and with our lives, thanksgiving shall flow from within. Then we as citizens of His kingdom will know that whatever He sends us is done for our salvation. Do you have trials and sufferings? Look to our Almighty God. He is our strength. Are there temptations that plague you every day? Look to our Deliverer, keep your eye upon Him.

Finally, if we have a right relationship with God, it must follow that this will be evident towards others also. If we love God we will love the brother also. This too, involves self-denial. This certainly means that a citizen of God’s kingdom will not find friends with those who do not belong to that kingdom. Light and darkness, Christ and Satan cannot stand together, neither can or may believer and unbeliever. Young people, find your friends with those who know and love the Creator of heaven and earth, the Holy One of Israel — His church. To do any different is to reveal that we are “unfit ploughmen” and therefore “not fit for the kingdom of God”. Read verse

62 of Luke 9 again.

We could ask ourselves many questions as to how we deny ourselves and how we view fellow Christians. Do we really esteem one another better than ourselves? Are we tempted to look “down” at one in school who is not so popular? If so, ask yourself, “Does God of Heaven look “down” on that person? Are we tempted to make fun of one of God’s sheep who might be physically or mentally handicapped? This is a serious sin you know, because God is the Maker of us all. Let us look at one another, and act toward each other with the thought in our minds, “This is also one of God’s precious children”.

All of our life should be a “Thanksgiving Day”, because of the knowledge that the Infinite God has given us about Himself, and the knowledge that all of our sins are forgiven for the sake of Christ. And, for all of that, we will deny ourselves and love Him, and those who belong to His kingdom. Give us grace for this, O God!

Originally Published in:

Vol. 42 No. 9 November 1983