

Aug. 25th, 2021

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Our readings for today offer some interesting contradictions, between sacred and secular, between Jesus and the Pharisees and perhaps ourselves.

In the first reading, Paul commends himself to the Thessalonians for his labor as a tentmaker so as not to be dependent on them. The effect of this toil was that it led his listeners to faith. In other words, his spoken human word was received as the WORD of God.

In the Gospel, we find Jesus, addressing the Pharisees as ‘whited sepulchers and hypocrites.’ They wore ‘dignified robes and sacred phylacteries’ but they were frauds. They choose **not** to enter the Kingdom. They blocked the way for others. Blind to the essence of truth – God’s Presence among them. They exchanged the truth of God for human ideas about religion. Their “sacred” accomplishments were detested by God.

Jesus offers a third contradiction. Cynthia Bourgeault names it his kenotic path. Jesus could have been a prince on a throne, holding power, riches and every kind of privilege. Instead, he let it go; consciously choosing a path that assured suffering, humiliation, desolation, death on a cross. Jesus entered as he did, where he did, doing what he did because God needed us to finally comprehend - **God is the love that gives itself away for the sake of more love**. Jesus could only communicate this by standing outside of power structures, inviting the disciples (and us) to join him to discover new life with him on the margins.

In Jesus: God shows us what it looks like to be this vulnerable, humble, and self-giving.

In Jesus: We see one who does not run from what broke his heart, nor calculate what He could gain from a specific act.

Instead, Jesus sought to give his life away so he and others, including us might flourish as God intends.

Where does that leave us? Am I/we clear in our thoughts/ actions -- aware of our inconsistencies? Do I/we ask pardon for our hypocrisy? Do we pray for those who suffer because of us?

Are we willing to probe the depths of this kenotic way of Jesus? Can we take our possessions, abilities, identities, control and perhaps even life itself and let go of it. So God can use it.

References: Cynthia Bourgeault, The Wisdom Jesus
Richard Rohr, Daily Meditation, 8/12/21