

Daily Devotion – Wednesday, July 15, 2020

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Proverbs 11:23-30

²³The desire of the righteous ends only in good; the expectation of the wicked in wrath. ²⁴Some give freely yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due, and only suffer want. ²⁵A generous person will be enriched, and one who gives water will get water. ²⁶The people curse those who hold back grain, but a blessing is on the head of those who sell it. ²⁷Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor, but evil comes to the one who searches for it. ²⁸Those who trust in their riches will wither, but the righteous will flourish like green leaves. ²⁹Those who trouble their households will inherit wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise. ³⁰The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, but violence takes lives away.

How convenient it is that this topic runs parallel to what we've been studying in the bible study we've been doing on the book of James. This past Sunday we were studying what the book of James says about faith against those we deem as evil. I asked the group in our study to make a list of some assumptions we make about those we deem wealthy and another list of assumptions we make to those we deem poor. The reality is, our cultural influences can define how we understand both. If you've been joining us for the book class I've been leading online on "How to be an Antiracist", we have talked about something the author mentions in his book. It is the author's contention that we all are some point are racist and antiracist depending whether it serves our own purposes. I believe the same could be said when it comes to how we understand evil.

It's unfortunate, but evil is all around us. As I said in my sermon last week, just because someone or something is evil does not mean they are incapable of good. I think sometimes, our cultural bias encourages us to judge without considering all the facts and circumstances. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying all people are good, just that we are called to look beyond our bias and see the good.

In the study in the book of James, it says this: “In the New Testament “love” is deeper than an emotion. It is more than a natural attraction of one person to another. During the civil rights struggle, some opponents claimed that you could not legislate love. You either felt it or you did not. When we say this, do we fully understand the biblical meaning of love? Jesus can command it of his followers because it is more than an emotion, more than something you either feel or do not feel. Rather, love often involves the loving action. However difficult it might seem for us, are we not bound to do the works of love for the people—to do for even those who seem undeserving what we would want done for us? This includes praying for those people, doing what one can to care for their needs, living a life of love before them that has no use for partiality or judgment. In all circumstances, when the Christian or the Christian community is faced with those who see themselves as enemies, the Christian response is to do the works of love toward them. The feelings may or may not come later, but the actions come now. The Christian’s response to an “enemy” is not a reaction to what the enemy does. Rather, it should be determined by Christ’s command to love our enemies”.

Love is indeed deeper than an emotion. When we trust in the work of the Holy Spirit within us, we become the agents of God’s love and peace and are called to share that with all we encounter. During these difficult and contentious times in our country, may we never forget our responsibility as disciples of Christ to love first. We love because we were first loved. Thanks be to God.

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