August 1, 2019

Scripture

Matthew 13: 47-53
Jesus said to the disciples:
"The Kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth." "Do you understand all these things?"
They answered, "Yes."
And he replied,
"Then every scribe who has been instructed in the Kingdom of heaven is like the head of a household who brings from his storeroom both the new and the old."
When Jesus finished these parables, he went away from there.

Our Scripture Reflection
Our powerful Gospel reading found only in Matthew makes two important points for us:
1. God’s invitation to salvation is universal in scope. He desires all of His children to be saved.
2. There will be a Judgment at the end of our time here on earth, but the Judgment is also taking place in many ways every day: Through the convicting words of a sermon, a scripture passage, an article we read, an incident that calls us to act with compassion.....how we respond to these and other calls to Judgment are most important.
The manner in which we respond will determine the outcome of our salvation. Therefore, it is crucial that we live the way of the Gospel at all times.

**Food for your Journey**

On more than one occasion I heard Reinhold Niebuhr tell of a wealthy man he knew who set out one day to improve a public image that had been badly tarnished in his rise to wealth and power. He began to give liberally to various philanthropic foundations, agreed to serve on committees promoting one good cause or another, and... (C:\Users\jcromwell\OneDrive - vCenter Technologies) treating his employees in a somewhat more humane fashion than had been his custom. His motive in all this, Niebuhr would point out, was quite cynical. He wanted to improve his IMAGE in the public mind, NOT his way of life.

But then a strange thing happened. The man discovered to his own surprise that he enjoyed his new role in the community. It was pleasant to have people think well of him, and the civic work that he was doing gave him genuine satisfaction. The upshot of the whole process, Niebuhr concluded, was a profound, not a superficial transformation of the man's character.

Now clearly this experience was a manifestation of grace and the strange ways in which it moves in life. But it was grace mediated through judgment. Niebuhr's friend did not undergo some mysterious warming of the heart while reading the Bible. Nor was he stirred to love by a poignant encounter with some dramatic human need. Grace reached him through the judgment of God mediated by the disapproval of his neighbors. The indictment of his way of life by the community wrought changes more profound than any he contemplated.


---

**A Prayer from the Heart**

Dear God, I love You and I want to spend eternity with You in Heaven. As I strive to live in imitation of Your Son, may I be found worthy to do so when my life ends here on earth. Amen