

## Enough

Wayne Waibel – 08/30/2020

From this point on in Matthew, Jesus has turned his attention away from the multitudes that have been dogging Him to focus on His disciples. He's very aware of the intensities that await Him in Jerusalem, and preparing His disciples for their mission has become His primary concern. And while they've been with Him a while now, and have picked up on the nature of His – and their – purpose, they still have much to grow into.

As a people, we – too, are at a point in our collective conscience that seems to be building toward a reckoning of sorts. As conditions worsen and long held norms disintegrate – one is left to gather what little self-respect remains and quietly proclaim, "Enough."

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What is it about power that so absolutely dismisses the least deserving in society and then to compound matters – drives them further to the margins? Pharaoh did it in ancient Egypt to the children of Israel. The ruling elite in first century Palestine did it to Jesus and His followers – even going to the extent of involving the imperial machinery of Rome to do the dirty work. We see it at work in our age across corporate and municipal systems alike.

That's why we, as enlightened and informed Christians are cautioned to pay particular attention. So that when we're out minding our own business – tending to our father-in-law's flocks – and a bush bursts into flames without being consumed – we take stock of the situation.

The exchange between Moses and God is the classic God/Prophet scenario. It sets the trend for all encounters to come. The difference in this first of its kind is that Moses finds his true home not with humans, but with God. He is brought up as and then rejected by the Egyptians. Despite the fact that he will (with God's help of course) liberate the children of Israel from the oppression of Pharaoh, they will none the less gripe and snipe at every turn, leaving Moses homeless, except in the presence of God.

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People do that. They whine and complain about all manner of perceived injustice. It makes it very difficult to clearly see the problem of inequity that does exist. And now we've whipped ourselves into such a frenzy that to even mention it has become risky. Far too many of us have fallen into the temptation of imposing our will on God's and then calling it righteous indignation. Enough!

Churches are practice fields for living the covenant of love Paul talks about in Romans. His lengthy discourse outlines and essentially proposes a ministry of radical hospitality. That's a series of values to get behind as opposed to the clamor of rhetoric that currently passes for moral high ground.

See if any of these words sound familiar, and then ask yourself where they apply: Love – good – kindly affectionate – brotherly love – honor – diligence – serving – rejoicing – hope – patient – prayer – hospitality – bless – humble – peaceably – and these are just words taken straight out of today's Epistle lesson.

**9** Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.

**10** Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;

**11** not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord;

**12** rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;

**13** distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

**14** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

**15** Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

**16** Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

**17** Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

**18** If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

**19** Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

**20** Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

**21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

This is what Paul learned from Jesus. And Jesus took these words to live by to the cross. The cross where He dies in our place. But that death does not exempt us from the cost of discipleship. And our faithfulness to the call of discipleship, not our verbal confession, will determine our standing with God.

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God seeks to bless us. His dialogue with Moses is most revealing. After arguing back and forth with God about who am I to go to Pharaoh or lead the children of Israel out of captivity, etc., the usual prophetic reluctance – God simply asserts that He will certainly be with Moses. He calls us, and He stands with us – we will not be abandoned. Ever.

And if we want to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus – it’s a fair bet that most folks will have a hard time getting past the first hurdle. And that’s where we come in. As a community of faith dedicated to ministry in this world, we will more than likely find ourselves standing among those who say, “Enough.” Enough rage and jealousy. Enough inflammatory rhetoric. Enough defiance of civil conventions. Enough violence and destruction. Enough.

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If you want to build a better world, you can start by denying yourself. Think of the needs of others. Work to accomplish a peace and an equity in your tiny sphere of contact. Then you can pick up your cross and follow Him.

God’s love will overcome all the by-products of this profit driven, sound bite following, hair trigger avenging, click happy world. Anger and Vengeance will not rule the day always. There will be a time of peace. And that peace will be enough. Amen.