

## Strength in Vulnerability

Wayne Waibel – 09/19/2021

There is a perception among the rich and powerful that willingness to yield is a sign of weakness. And this perceived vulnerability is usually exploited because that is what you do when you operate from a position of strength – you take advantage.

Not so in the Christian community where leadership and authority are based upon service and humility. There is a divine strength in vulnerability. This radical servant leadership is not just for the church; it is also the witness of the church to the world.

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Jesus has much to teach His disciples, and there is very little time now. His betrayal and death are rapidly approaching. The disciples are trying very hard to be good students, but their humanness is thwarting their progress. They want to do the righteous thing, but what that might be often eludes them.

A lot of what Jesus says and does goes contrary to the norms of the day. While He knows His purpose was to fulfill the scriptures, many view His actions as subversive and radical.

When you start talking about how the meek will inherit the earth, and how the first shall be last – people are going to scratch their heads and consider that you may very well be out of your mind.

Even though His disciples were making progress and beginning to understand who Jesus was and His mission here on earth – there were still many obstacles in front of them – their own egos being chief among them.

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I used to wonder why the disciples had such difficulty understanding their role and what was expected of them. But as you study the gospel, it becomes clear that the frailties and shortcomings of the disciples provide the perfect opportunity for Jesus to illustrate exactly what He expected of them – thereby enlightening us as to what He requires of and desires for us also. God yearns for the Spirit that He has caused to dwell in us.

We've seen it played out in the not so distant past. A disgruntled employee decides that the only way to cope with being disrespected at work is to teach everybody a lesson.

I'm not sure when respect became this all-important commodity that is so fragile and volatile that extra security precautions are now necessary at work and school to protect against the inevitable provocation that unfolds when it is not afforded sufficiently.

When someone has decided that respect is the highest ideal one can exact from another – they just will not be persuaded otherwise. And as time has gone on, the list of things that constitute disrespect grows unwieldy and diluted. Nowadays forgetting to engage your turn signal can be taken as disrespect to the tune of staring down the business end of a 38 special! Unbelievable. Everything seems to warrant an extreme response.

There is a kindness and gentleness that needs to become more prevalent in the world. A narrative that says there's room for everyone at the table, and if we speak in normal tones instead of screaming and pounding our fists, everyone gets heard. Imagine that – reasonable dialog!

If you adopt a vulnerability – yield the floor – give up your place in line – curb your views that another's may be examined – a reasonableness can not only gain a foothold, but actually flourish.

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This morning's Epistle marvelously illuminates what the path of a life of love can look like. It reminds us that, "the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without particularity and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace."

Is this really such a lofty aspiration that only a select few can grasp it's meaning and follow its teachings? I don't think so. I think we sometimes overwhelm ourselves so much with what we think we ought to do that we forget how to simply be.

And if we are willing to be vulnerable, we'll discover an entirely different motivation in our efforts to be of service. We will become predisposed to a life of humility and grace. One which does not suffer from the trappings of excess and greed, but wonder and grace and peace and love.

Envisioning the future can be stressful, lonely work. But those who truly love God cannot fail to live in peace with one another. One must choose to serve God or the world; no middle ground is possible. There's a time to stand and deliver, and there's a time to yield and overcome. The trick is in knowing when which is called for.

Wisdom from above has nothing to do with good ideas and everything to do with living good lives. I'd like to think that's what the disciples finally arrived at. They stopped worrying about who was the greatest among them and started ministering unto the least among them. They certainly had the perfect example to emulate in Jesus. As do we. Wisdom commences only with a diligent search. It needs to be sought.

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Whenever there is a crisis situation pretty much anywhere in the world, you'll find a couple dozen people whipping their camera phones out trying to be the first to post someone else's misfortune on social media so they can brag about their hits or likes or views.

But you'll also find one or two people dropping whatever they were doing, rushing into the fray, and performing a heroic rescue or defusing a volatile situation or lending comfort and understanding. Be the one or two, not the couple dozen.

Humility – meekness, and being willing to show your strength in vulnerability, or relinquish control – are all different sides to the same coin. These are qualities that define the true character of a person. The hardest of these is relinquishing control.

All along the way – you are simply moving through your day. But because of your willingness to surrender to vulnerability, the dogs of war do not lap at your heels. The little voice within resonates distinctly with vigor, and the wide world around you acknowledges that you are indeed a peacemaker - sowing the seeds of righteousness, and overcoming the trials and tribulations set before you with a grace and dignity reserved only for the most vulnerable – therein lies absolute strength. Amen.