

Taming the Fox: On Loving One's Enemies

In the book, *The Little Prince*, the prince meets a fox and discusses the nature of friendship. The fox describes his relationship with hunters and his prey, chickens, as one of strangers. The fox stalks chickens for food. He spends his day avoiding and observing the habits of hunters so as never to come into contact with them. The hunters, on the other hand, take great pride in learning and observing the habits of foxes in order to catch and kill them before they eat their chickens. They exist in an interdependent relationship characterized as being adversarial. The fox invites the innocent little prince to tame him so that they can become friends. Once a friendship is formed between them, the fox reveals to the little prince a secret. "It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eyes." The fox goes on to say, "Men have forgotten this truth...but you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed."

Who is My Adversary?

It probably doesn't take much effort to identify a relationship in our lives that we would characterize as being adversarial. It may be a co-worker, a sibling, a parent, a child, a spouse or even God Himself - there usually is at least one person with whom we are at odds. Our Lord revealed a new possibility for those who would become His disciples - "enemies," can be loved. "But I say to you, keep on loving your enemies, blessing those who curse you, doing well to those who hate you, and keep on praying for those who despitefully use you and are persecuting you, "so that you might become sons of your Father Who is in the heavens... (Mt. 5:44,45)." We are not called to avoid, ignore, gossip, complain or obsess day after day about those who would affront us - we are called to love them. In fact, the above reactions reveal various forms of enslavement that result from not loving one's enemies. This is the very reason why Jesus taught that by not loving one's enemies we actually do more harm to ourselves than to them. We can become enslaved by the passion ignited within by the affront of an enemy. In addition, consequently, it even jeopardizes our relationship with God. How can we hate someone and at the same time say that we have God's love within? (1 John 2:9). This inconsistency reveals a trapped soul that is not free to love. "The Lord wants us to love one another: in this -- in love towards God and our fellow man -- lies freedom (St. Silouan)."

How to Love One's Enemies?

"The Lord taught me to love my enemies. Without the grace of God we cannot love our enemies, but the Holy Spirit teaches us love... (St. Silouan)." For the Holy Spirit to teach us love, He must be present in our hearts. The Holy Spirit enters into a humble and contrite heart that is found praying for one's enemies. "If you will pray for your enemies; peace will come to you; but when you come to love your enemies- know that a great measure of grace dwells in you... (St. Silouan)." If we cannot find it within ourselves to

pray for someone, St. Silvanos says, "...at least do not revile and curse your enemies, and things will already be better; but if a man curse and abuse his enemies it is plain that an evil spirit abides in him." In this condition, we have allowed ourselves to become the enemies of God. When we have reached a "limit" or a "limitation" this is not a moment of shame but of conversion and discovery. Finding one's limit in a relationship invites us to call upon God for His grace to allow us to go beyond a point previously thought impossible.

God's Love has Been Made Visible

The fox speaks as philosophers did before the appearance of Christ: what is essential is invisible to the eyes. Christ makes what is invisible, visible - He reveals in Himself, the Father's love for the world. "For all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him; and through Him to reconcile all things to Him, having made peace through the blood of His Cross, through Him, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens. And you, being once alienated and enemies in your mind, in wicked works, yet now did He reconcile in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and without reproach before Him- if indeed you continue abiding in the faith, firmly founded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the Gospel which you heard...(Col. 1:19-23)." The grace of Christ is what has converted us from dead works to life. We are called upon to continue abiding in the faith by not speaking against anyone, praying for them and finding the love of Christ within us which allows us, in turn, to love them.

In Christ there are No Foxes or Hunters

Jesus was labeled as a sinner because He loved those who were considered enemies of God. "The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a man, a glutton and a wine-drinker, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' (Mt. 11:19)." Christ does not allow a person's actions to interfere with His loving us. God loves us unconditionally. His desire for us is to discover the great dignity and honor that is ours when we are found living in the grace of Christ. This is the way of life, loving one another and being loved by God. This condition is what brings about a new heart; this is what turns enemies into the friends of God.

The "Secret"

Here is the secret and it is not what Oprah is pandering as the "law of attraction." Jesus Christ comes to earth and reveals to His disciples the "mysteries" of heaven only to those who would become His disciples or students. The Lord said, "You are My friends if you be doing whatsoever I command you. "I no longer call you slaves, for the slave knows not what his lord is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things which I heard from My Father I made known to you (John 15:14, 15)." To become a disciple of Christ is to freely practice His commandments and everything He taught, especially

those things which we find ourselves incapable of doing. A student of Christ wants to learn it all and progress from one level to the next - we can never be satisfied until we leave the earth. There is an innate desire of the soul for knowing God deeper and deeper and this is what makes a saint a possibility. Knowledge of God is an ongoing process of discovering one's limitations, going beyond them and finding enlightenment. The closer we draw to Christ, the more the soul desires to learn and grow in grace. Christ eventually comes to dwell within us and begins to teach the heart directly through His presence.

What does it Mean to be Human?

To be human is to give one's life (will) over to God and submit to live by His will. "When the soul is entirely given over to the will of God the Lord Himself takes her in hand and the soul learns directly from God. Whereas, before, she turned to teachers and to the scriptures for instruction; but rarely happens that the soul's teacher is the Lord Himself through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Few know this, save only those who live according to God's will (St. Siloun)."

Most of the time, God is approached through external means. Perhaps, because a certain amount of independence is retained by picking and choosing aspects of the gospel most conducive to what we are comfortable doing. The problem with this is that a different gospel is created from the one our Lord gave. The grace of the Holy Spirit only comes when He find an undivided heart who has completely been given over to the will of God. Mary is the model of what it means to be human as she freely gave her soul over to the will of God. She was fully human in that she had no self-interest and was free to respond to God's bidding through Archangel Gabriel.

The New Commandment

"A new commandment I give to you, that you be loving one another; even as I loved you, that you also be loving one another. "By this shall all know that you are My disciples, if you be having love among one another (Jn. 13:34, 35)." Taming the fox, is a way of saying, finding peace with God and one another. As our years on earth progress and we discover our many limitations, one finds that every one of them has a root that only Christ can cure, heal, and allow the process of spiritual growth to occur. In the many ways we might understand what it means to be a "member" of Assumption Greek Orthodox Church - unless there is a personal commitment to become a student, a disciple of Christ in the fullest sense of what that means, our "membership" is only superficial. If we find that our relationships are more characteristic of a fox and hunter perhaps we have yet to begin to find peace with God and love for one another.

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