

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Nov 15th 2013

Love God and love others—that is the gospel message. One of the hardest battles we face is looking outside of ourselves for the benefit of others. Am I comfortable? Am I happy? What do I need right now? What do I need tomorrow? These are questions we ask ourselves every day as our world urges us to put our happiness first. Even the Snickers candy bar commercials tell us “we deserve a break” and that treating ourselves should be the priority. But what about others? What about dying to our flesh and loving our brothers and sisters?

That is the mission we are all called to. We are not just encouraged to follow it; we are commanded to follow it. We have to understand and accept that loving others is generally inconvenient. It means we don't get our way, we don't get to be comfortable, and we have to fight our natural inclinations to judge people or to “get along” with people who aren't like us.

Today's gospel message from Luke 17 reminds us “Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses it will save it.” If we live our lives trying to find happiness by meeting our own needs, we will come up short. If, however, we follow Jesus' example and live to meet the needs of others, we will find life. We will experience true joy and happiness by loving people.

Before I gave my life to Christ I was unexplainably discontent. My life revolved around finding my happiness. I had a job, strong relationships, and all of the outwardly necessary ingredients for happiness, but something was missing. I kept trying to fill the void by following the world's advice for a seemingly blissful life, but still felt hopeless. Then I heard the gospel message and realized I was relying too much on my own strength and not on God's. If I put my trust in him and give him everything, I would gain everything.

I had learned to love him and let him in. The next step was learning to love others. It's a selfless love; always seeking to do more, be more, and serve more. It takes time and energy and a genuine, intentional heart. We know it's the right thing to do, but yet we struggle with it every day. We can never perfect the imitation of God's love, but we can spend our whole life trying. That's what he wants. God wants us to struggle and lean on him and ask him for help. This “work” of loving others does not go unnoticed. In fact, he's already promised us the greatest reward—life. Everywhere you are and everywhere you go, love people, and you will find joy.

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