

"The Kingdom of God Is Within You"

(The Passions and Purposes of the King - John 17:1-26) Part 3

The concept of the Kingdom of God could, I suppose, be packaged and presented in such a way that it may appeal to the natural interests of man... up to a point. We are at that point! Many people are attracted to the idea of "truth" - the secrets of the universe, facts that tie us to reality, that when practiced might make our lives work "better". Lots of people are also open to spiritual possibilities, some type of mystical "oneness" or union with the underlying cause of all things. Until they hear this: "The Kingdom of God has a clear and present passion for SELF-EXPENDITURE... for sacrificial living". Then most everyone wants to hop off the "Peace Train"!

The gospel according to man wants to have nothing much to do with that passion or purpose. Do you want to know the truth that will make you successful and give you a user-friendly "pipeline" to transcendence? You can fill up arenas with that stuff. Do you want to be sacrificially poured out for others? You could meet in most restrooms with lots of "seats" left over! Nevertheless, we will never be at home in a lie (we were made for Truth). We will never be at home in separation (we were made for Oneness, for Fellowship). And equally, we will never be at home living for ourselves... WE WERE MADE TO BE FOR OTHERS!

The passions and purposes of the King at work in us are not intended to make us successful. They are meant to make us sacrificial. In John 17:19 we get an x-ray view, a microscope look into the heart of Jesus, "...and for their sakes...". That immediately cancels out the "self-help" religions mostly aimed at optimizing and benefitting the individual adherent. This exposes the many "pop" preachers and personal growth gurus as mere theological or psychological wind-socks - full of nothing but the cultural winds of this world below. Too many of our churches are more culturally conditioned than kingdom conditioned, with very little understanding or experience of doing what we do for the sake of others.

The King of our Kingdom is a Self-giving Lover (I Jo 4:8). Love is not what He feels for us, not a commodity He gives to us... it is Who He is! And God always does what He is - He gives Himself, He pours out Himself for the sake of others. He "so loved the world" that He could not be compelled to do anything but come to us in our distress. While still rebellious adversaries, He meets us in Person where we are to "demonstrate His love for us" - the only adequate antidote for our separated, sin-sick condition.

This is what it means to be God. It must also be what it means to be the people of God - children of the second birth, born from above in love to share in His nature of life for others. To be members of His family, citizens of His Kingdom, calls for us to be conditioned by a Love beyond our natural comprehension - but not beyond its receptivity and transformation by faith. To say "Yes, Lord" to the "incorruptible" love (Eph 6:24) of Christ the King is to invite that King to divest us of all that is not born of His love in the first place!

(Next month, our "Battle Cry" and "Purpose" to live compelled by His Love.)

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Greetings

Is Jesus God's son or Mary's son? Yes! He is both - fully 100% Divinity and 100% humanity. Perfectly capable of "exercising" His humanity without "exorcising" His Divinity.

The Christmas story is nothing if not paradoxical. He is born a creature, yet He is the Creator of all things. He enters our world as a human child, but He is a Divine King. His first witnesses are human shepherds even though they were considered so unreliable their "witness" was not allowed in human courts of law. He lived His life under the rule of Herods, Pilates, and Caesars, yet He, Himself was Lord of all. He comes into the world as "one of us" but does so to make us like Him. The Man of "Peace on Earth" faces threat and opposition from beginning to end and even wins our peace through an act of brutal violence - death on a cross.

Meaning what? If we want to experience and express the meaning, the joy, the peace of Immanuel - God with(in) us - we better be prepared to be as at home in "paradox" as we are in what we consider to be "orthodox". As at home in the "mystery of the Gospel" as we are in the "facts" of the Bible... lest God become to us a royal pain in the... neck!

Merry Christmas!



CALENDAR



**** (Steve is on a travel "sabbatical" until 2023) ****

NOVEMBER

29

Ocala Study ** NOTE CHANGE **

DECEMBER

4,11,18,25

FBCA

13

Alachua Study



2023 Florida Retreat



February 24, 25, 26, 2023

Alachua, Florida

*"Eternally Connected: Living with
Uncommon Sense in a Senseless World"*

**Deadline for reservations with \$50 per person deposit
will be January 27th, 2023**

\$325 couple

\$170 single (2 to a room)

\$270 single (1 to a room)

Includes:

lodging, conference fee, Saturday dinner and 2 breakfasts

\$30 person conference fee (no lodging, no meals)

\$50 person fee and Saturday dinner

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