

May 19, 2013

TIME OF REFLECTION

“You must get used to the idea that it is one thing to do the works of the law and quite another to fulfill it.... [T]o fulfill the law means to do its work eagerly, lovingly and freely, without the constraint of the law; it means to live well and in a manner pleasing to God, as though there were no law or punishment.”

“Faith is a work of God in us, which changes us and...makes us completely different people in heart, mind, senses, and all our powers, and brings the Holy Spirit with it. What a living, creative, active powerful thing is faith! It is impossible that faith ever stops doing good. Faith doesn't ask whether good works are to be done, but, before it is asked, it has done them. It is always active. Whoever doesn't do such works is without faith...”

~Martin Luther (1483-1546) from Preface to His Commentary on Romans

“That a god should put up with adversity, I could understand. The gods of Hinduism face their fair share... Adversity, yes. Reversals of fortune, yes. Treachery, yes. But *humiliation? Death?* I couldn't imagine Lord Krishna consenting to be stripped naked, whipped, mocked, dragged through the streets and, to top it off, crucified – and at the hands of mere humans, to boot. I'd never heard of a Hindu god dying... [D]ivinity should not be blighted by death. It's wrong... For if the Son is to die, it cannot be fake... The death of the Son must be real. Father Martin assured me that it was. But once a dead God, always a dead God, even resurrected. The Son must have the taste of death forever in His mouth. The Trinity must be tainted by it; there must be a certain stench at the right hand of God the Father. The horror must be real. Why would God wish that upon Himself? Why not leave death to the mortals? Why make dirty what is beautiful, spoil what is perfect? 'Love.' That was Father Martin's answer.”

~ Pi in Yann Martel's *The Life of Pi*
as he first heard about the crucifixion

The “community of Christians springs solely from the Biblical and Reformation message of the justification of man through grace alone; this alone is the basis of the longing of Christians for one another.”

~Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945), German pastor-theologian

Worship through the Word

SERMON – “Love: The Final Proof” – *Pastor Don Willeman*

SERMON PASSAGE – *1 John 3 (NASB)*

¹See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ²Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. ³And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

⁴Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him. ⁷Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; ⁸the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. ⁹No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.

¹¹For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; ¹²not as Cain, *who* was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

¹³Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. ¹⁴We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. ¹⁵Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. ¹⁶We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. ¹⁷But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? ¹⁸Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. ¹⁹We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him ²⁰in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows all things. ²¹Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; ²²and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.

²³This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. ²⁴The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.