

From the PASTOR'S DESK



Change for the Better

The opening of today's Gospel is harsh! It sounds a bit much, if not entirely wrong. Jesus says we must hate our father, our mother, our spouse, our children, sisters and brothers, even our own lives in order to follow Him. What Jesus is doing is nudging us towards a glimpse of the fundamental change required in us to become sons and daughters of God.

We seek self-improvement: we want to change for the better. Even those who seem content with themselves will realize that part of their contentment is to recognize the need to grow. What the gospel suggests is that we have set our goals at a limited distance or in a mistaken direction. We underestimate the magnitude of the change and transformation required and possible.

There are examples throughout history where we are promised that structural changes in society will solve all our problems. Bring on the revolution! And, of course, we find that very little changes. Revolutions are unlikely to change much unless they are accompanied by revolutionary change in the hearts of the people.

The people in the gospel are following Jesus, but not for the right reasons. They do not know where He is going: His crucifixion and ultimate return to the Father. They are looking for change but do not appreciate that following Jesus entails the ultimate change of finding their way to God. They are looking for security in this life.

They and we are the hungry, who want to be fed; the sick, who want to be healed; and the poor, who want to be rich. They and we follow Him enthusiastically, full of hope, looking for the good things in this life.

As followers of Jesus, we want an improved old life. He challenges us. He wants to know if we really know where He is going and what the cost of the journey will be. He is not offering an improvement in the old order. He wants to give us a different life.

We cannot desire the good only for ourselves, our lives, our families, and our possessions. Jesus is asking us to think in terms of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is thinking of humanity as God's family on its way to a final outcome. Jesus is asking us to give up the things which distract us from God. This can even include family.

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