

The Theology of Leftovers

A few weeks ago Terry made meatloaf for supper. My wife makes the best meatloaf. (My apologies to my mother.) Within a few days I was raiding the kitchen looking for something to eat and decided to have a meatloaf sandwich. Well, it fed my munchies but it just wasn't the same as fresh baked.

Have you ever noticed how leftovers are just missing something? Except for Terry's cheesy potato casserole that gets better and better.... Oops, sorry my stomach just ran away with my thoughts.



I began to contemplate the theology of leftovers. What was so different between the fresh baked meatloaf and my leftover sandwich? After all both contained the exact same ingredients. It seems to me a lot of it had to do with presentation.

I remember leaving the house that morning seeing the meat defrosting on the counter and asking what's for supper. Meatloaf was the covenant promise that peeked into my thoughts throughout the day. When I arrived home that evening the house was filled with the pleasing aroma of meatloaf. Soon the table was set, centered with a platter of steaming meatloaf, surrounded with sides of garlic mashed potatoes, and vegetables.

The meal was an offering of Terry's best efforts, an expression of her love for her family. And the aroma of her grace invited all to renewal from a long day, through love, conversation and fellowship. No wonder the sandwich on a paper plate was missing something!

This very likely represents the difference between Cain and Abel's offering to the Lord in Genesis Chapter 4:3-5:

“In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor.”

We are to honor the Lord with our covenant offering of our first fruits-- the best quality.

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

Once we have decided what to offer Him and made a covenant what we will give, we should let nothing deter us from fulfilling our pledge.

Why does the Lord require this of us? Because He loves us. When we approach the Lord in an attitude of leftovers it affects our relationship with God. Not that God loves us less, but ... we receive, we experience, we soak in less of the nourishment of God's love when we come in an attitude of leftovers.

How often we approach the Lord in an attitude of leftover. I'll come to worship or daily prayer or read God's word, if I'm not too tired; or as long as we aren't getting company for dinner; or I don't have work, sports or I'm out of town.

How often do we worship or seek God in our leftover time? The Ten Commandments tell us to honor the Sabbath and keep it holy. Six days you shall work but the seventh day is for the Lord. Is God a priority with you?

You are a priority with God.

When God created humans he said, "Let us create man in our image." But sin has spoiled that image. Sin is the evidence of giving things of this world priority in our lives and offering God the leftovers.

But, God would not allow anything to separate you from God's self, not even sin or death. Since only God is holy and only He could restore your relationship, your image. God made an offering of God's first fruits, His son Jesus for you.

Lent is a season of examination. We look at ourselves, our lives in the light of what God has offered us, and we make new or renew our covenant of what we will offer to the Lord, both in way of our financial material offerings as well as our spiritual offerings.

We often call these covenant offerings; these pledge commitments "spiritual disciplines." We pledge to discipline ourselves to offer first to the Lord, a priority practice, of our time and resources in one or more of the practices of Worship, Prayer, Meditation, Study of Scripture, Christian Fellowship, Financial Giving, Fasting, Simple Living, or Solitude.

John Wesley called these disciplines, "Means of Grace." Pointing out in these practices we draw close to God and experience the presence of God's grace in our life in new and deeper ways, which continues to transform us more and more into our created image, the likeness of Christ.

I invite you to choose one of these means of grace and make a renewed commitment to offer your first fruits, your very best, and let nothing deter you from the experience God's grace in that commitment.

For example, if your commitment is to daily prayer set a time, a place and a minimum duration for prayer. And then begin to anticipate God's grace in that time. Let the thought of experiencing God in the time peek into your thoughts throughout the day. Then when you come to your prayer time, begin by becoming aware of the aroma of God's presence. Reflect on God's greatness, faithfulness. How deeply God cares for you. Allow His great offering for you invite you to renewal and transformation into Christ likeness. And let us not approach God in an attitude of leftovers but:

"Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." Hebrews 4:16

Blessings

Pastor Duane