

THE GOSPELS REVEAL THE FATHER

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For a couple of months now ... we have been talking about the general topic of Faith ... latterly focusing on the fact that we're not trying to persuade a reluctant God to come to our help.

God is for us — not against us. He is gracious and easily entreated. For a couple of weeks or so ... we've focused on Him being a Father to us — a "Much-More" Father.

Continuing that theme. Many people ... believers just don't "see" God this way. He's harsh ... critical — never satisfied ... difficult to please ... and "old" as well! But ... if we do have a wrong image in our minds ... it does take time and repetition to renew our minds.

We've commented that the importance of reading or studying the Bible — or prayer — is not that we accumulate doctrines — but the primary goal is that we come to better know the Author of scripture ... the Creator of them.

John 17:1-3 (NKJV) The "real" Lord's Prayer

1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,
2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

One translation brings out the meaning as ... "to know and experience you". We need to know and experience The Father.

John 5:39-40 (NKJV)

39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.

40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.

John 5:39 (MSG)

39 "**You have your heads in your Bibles constantly because you think you'll find eternal life there. But you miss the forest for the trees. These Scriptures are all about me!**

The scriptures aren't an end in themselves ... they direct us to the Person of Jesus ... and His Father. We should read the scriptures with that understanding.

There are plenty of religious people around today just as there were in Jesus' day ... who "wear the uniforms" and may look outwardly very sincere and pious ... but don't have a personal relationship with The Father and Jesus. They don't know Jesus ... and He doesn't know them.

Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)

21 "**Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.**

22 **Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'**

23 **And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'**

"I never knew you!" And yet they preached. They did religious "works" ... "looked the part". They never actually knew Jesus ... and He never knew them!

We want to make sure our time that we spend in God's Word ... prayer ... "reflecting" ... strengthens our relationship with the Father ... come to understand Him better ... what He's like. Is He a Good God? Generous God? Or mean ... awkward ... fingers in His ears ... always demanding "blood, sweat and tears" from us before he dispenses any goodness to us (and even then ... only given out with an eye-dropper).

Don't spend all your time on "technical doctrines" as the Pharisees and lawyers did.

One particular useful area of study is the Gospels — and what they reveal about Jesus Himself. We see His actions ... His teachings ... His nature. It should help to reveal Him to us.

And that's also how we come to know the Father.

John 14:3-9 (NKJV)

3 And **if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself**; that where I am, there you may be also.

4 And where I go you know, and the way you know.”

5 Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?”

6 Jesus said to him, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (We need them both)**

7 **“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also**; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.”

8 Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”

9 Jesus said to him, **“Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father**; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?

Jesus and The Father are in complete total harmony. No disagreement. Not two separate plans or ways of life. When you see Jesus “in action” — you see essentially The Father in action. They could swap places and you'd probably not notice! They are so similar. So like-minded.

Hebrews 1:1-3 (NKJV)

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets,

2 **has in these last days spoken to us by His Son**, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds;

3 **who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person**, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

“Express Image” in the Greek: Charakter ... like the impress you get from a die.

Hebrews 1:3 (RSV)

3 ... **bears the very stamp** of (God's) nature

Hebrews 1:3 (Passion Translation NT)

3 ... **the exact expression** of God's true nature—**his mirror image!**

Scripture is plain and clear. If you want to know The Father ... you need to come to know The Lord Jesus. The Gospels are a big help to us!

John 5:19 (NKJV)

19 Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, **the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.**

Jesus follows The Father. He does nothing of His own volition.

John 5:30 (NKJV)

30 **I can of Myself do nothing.** As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because **I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.**

Jesus is perfectly happy to be doing The Father's will.

Not under duress! They're one in attitude and purpose. A totally shared outlook — totally shared values.

So let's have a brief look at Jesus from the perspective of knowing what He's like — and therefore what the Father's like.

Is it terrible to be called? To come to Jesus? It's not a bad invitation!

Matthew 11:25-30 (NKJV)

25 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.

26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.

28 **Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

29 **Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. (Just like His Father)**
30 **For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."**

Matthew 11:28-30 (Passion Translation NT)

28 **"Are you weary, carrying a heavy burden? Then come to me. I will refresh your life, for I am your oasis.**

29 Simply join your life with mine. **Learn my ways and you'll discover that I'm gentle, humble, easy to please. You will find refreshment and rest in me.**

30 For all that I require of you will be pleasant and easy to bear."

And we know that The Father is like Jesus — gentle ... easy to please ... looking to give us refreshment.

John 10:10 (NKJV)

10 **The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.**

Why did Jesus come? To do The Father's will ... which was ... to give us an abundant life!

Greek for "abundant life": Perissos — exceeding abundantly ... surpassing ... superior ... extraordinary.

Jesus said that He came only to do the will of The Father.

As mentioned ... the Gospels reveal much about Jesus — both His teachings and His nature in general ... which is also The Father's nature.

Matthew 9:9-13 (NKJV)

9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.

10 **Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.**

11 **And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"**

12 **When Jesus heard that, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.**

13 But go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ **For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”**

The prim and proper Pharisees — other religious leaders — would avoid tax collectors and public sinners at all costs — the rejects of society. They wouldn’t want to be seen in their company.

Jesus had no problem being around those that “High Society” rejects. And apparently ... they have no problem being around Him!

Matthew 11:16-19 (NKJV)

16 “But to what shall I liken this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions,

17 and saying:

‘We played the flute for you,

And you did not dance;

We mourned to you,

And you did not lament.’

18 For **John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’**

19 **The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’** But wisdom is justified by her children.”

NO WAY was Jesus a glutton or drunkard ... but it seems He was well-known for being around banquets ... festivities (we know of at least one wedding) ... clearly enjoying Himself and enjoying other people’s company — including the tax collectors and “sinners”.

Probably one of the reasons the Pharisees couldn’t recognise Jesus as The Messiah was they assumed a “Holy” Messiah wouldn’t associate with “lower-life” ... with sinful people.

But Jesus was clearly approachable — whoever you were ... rich or poor. He was a people-person.

Jesus’ nature hasn’t changed. It perfectly reveals The Father’s nature.

Both The Father and Jesus are “people-persons”. They didn’t turn sinners away. Aren’t you glad!!

Luke 19:1-10 (NKJV)

1 Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

2 **Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich.**

3 **And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature.**

4 **So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.**

5 **And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”**

6 So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.

7 **But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, “He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner.”**

8 Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.”

9 **And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;**

10 for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Zacchaeus was probably despised by the local community. It didn’t stop Jesus!

And Jesus’ visit made a difference ... made a big impact! Jesus’ willingness to overlook Zacchaeus’ public image ... Jesus’ kindness in visiting ... led him to repent and offer restitution.

No hint anywhere here that Jesus had been berating Zacchaeus ... threatening him with hell-fire ... showing any anger! Rather ... as Romans 2:4 says ... “the goodness of God leads you to repentance”.

One of the primary characteristics revealed in the Gospels is Jesus’ compassion for people — and by extension — The Father’s compassion.

Matthew 14:13-14 (NKJV)

13 When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities.

14 And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

Matthew 14:14 (Passion Translation NT)

14 Seeing so many people, his heart was deeply moved with compassion toward them ...

The next few verses of Matthew 14 then show Jesus feeding 5,000 men (and women and children) ... meeting physical needs. Not ignoring them ... not aloof ... but down-to-earth and practical.

Jesus looks after people. So does The Father.

The Gospels continue to show many occasions where Jesus' heart is with people in their difficulties.

John 11:20-44(NKJV)

20 Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.

21 Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

22 But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You."

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

27 She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

28 And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you."

29 As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him.

30 Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him.

31 Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there."

32 **Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."**

33 **Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.**

34 And He said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

35 **Jesus wept.**

36 Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"

37 And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"

38 Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

39 Jesus said, "Take away the stone."

Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days."

40 Jesus said to her, "**Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?**"

41 Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "**Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.**

42 And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."

43 **Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"**

44 And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

Jesus was moved with emotion at the plight of his friends ... their ignorance ... their unbelief ... their sense of loss. His emotions spilled over.

Jesus was no "robot" walking around ... aloof and with an Halo. HE WAS REAL ... HAD A REAL HEART.

AND THE FATHER IS JUST LIKE THAT TOO.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NKJV)

14 Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

15 For **we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

16 **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Jesus totally understands — and sympathises with us in our weaknesses. Because He has been here. He knows what it is like.

So — COME BOLDLY!

Hebrews 4:16 (Passion Translation NT)

16 **So now we come freely and boldly to where love is enthroned, to receive mercy's kiss and discover the grace we urgently need to strengthen us in our time of weakness.**

So ... if we struggle to see God as a caring Father ... the much-more Father — if we still see God as an aloof ... ancient judge in the heavens — remote and uncaring — then it would seem worthwhile to spend some good quality time — particularly in the Gospels.

They give us 4 separate accounts of the life and times of Jesus — who He was ... what He said and what He did. All of those things reveal a great deal about Jesus and The Father Himself.

At least as a start ... that's one way to come to know The Father as He really is!