

February 28, 2010

Human relationships based on trust and respect

(1 Sam 18:1-4, Phil 8-16, Mat 5:47-48)

When God created human beings in His image He gave them a mind to know Him, heart to love Him and a will to obey Him .But because of Sin the mind is now darkened, the heart is degraded and the will is dead. Satan made the first man and woman to doubt God's love and run away from Him even though God loved them and gave them everything. This broken relationship of man with God resulted in distorted human relationships. In the place of trust and respect there is now doubt and disregard of human values. This is what the fallen man's nature is. He always thinks about himself. However mending human relationships by restoring our broken relationship with Him is part of God's salvation plan for us. Propitiation, Redemption, Justification, reconciliation and Glorification are all there in the gift of salvation. The basis of all these is the cross of Christ. The binding bond in every relationship is love. God is love .His love is self-giving 'agape' love. But our love is always expecting and receiving love. What will you give me if I come to your house? What will you bring when you come to my house? That is our love. But all those who are born of God will love others. Therefore that which creates trust and respect in human relationships is love.

In today's epistle lesson the love Paul had for his spiritual child Onesimus is a type of God's love for each one of us. In today's Old Testament lesson the friendship between Jonathan and David is a type of friendship Jesus wants to have with His disciples. Law is given to us through Moses but grace and truth have come to us through Jesus who has reconciled us with Father. Truth and love are the two things that can mend relationships.

God's will for all of us in this Lenten season as we meditate on the cross is that all of us being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that we may all be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Ep 3:18, 19).This is today's Gospel lesson.

The Epistle lesson: Philemon 3-16
The Holy Spirit is the bond of all relationships of trust and respect.

God so loved the world that He gave his son as an atoning sacrifice for the world. Christ so loved the church that he went to die on the cross to sanctify us. The Holy Spirit produces that kind of love in us. When Paul was in Prison it was his usual custom to share the gospel with the fellow prisoners. In that way Onesimus who was the run away slave of Philemon was saved. The epistle of Philemon is the letter Paul wrote to Philemon urging him to accept Onesimus and love him as Christ has accepted us and loved us. This epistle illustrates the relationship that should be there among the fellow believers in a church.

The bond that developed between Paul and Onesimus reflects the love of God that accepts and loves the sinner. God is once again reminding us that we should love one another and accept one another as God has loved us and accepted us.

Paul is the best example of a believer who is transformed completely in to the likeness of Christ for he alone could say boldly, "follow me as I follow Jesus Christ." The love Paul showed to Onesimus reflects the love Christ has for the sinner. If in Jehovah Father's love is reflected, in Christ Jesus brotherly love is reflected. As a spiritual father we find the love of a father, the love a brother and the love of a mother in Paul's dealing with his fellow believers. As Philemon is also his spiritual son Paul is urging him in love to love Onesimus his begotten spiritual son as his own brother and accept him. An average Christian can not understand the utility of the epistle of Philemon as he does not know any thing about winning souls and discipling some body. Once, Onesimus was a slave who ran away from his master Philemon and he was of no use to him or God .But now having accepted Jesus Christ he became useful to God and had become very dear to Paul also. Paul has every right to command Philemon to accept Onesimus but he is not taking advantage of that but in all love and affection Paul is urging Philemon to accept Onesimus. Therefore we too may have legitimate rights but as followers of Christ we should accept the value of others and respect them and be ready to pay the cost also like Paul. This same trust and love is reflected in the relationship of David and Jonathan in today's Old Testament lesson.

The Old Testament lesson: 1 Samuel 18:1-4, 17-19
The Holy Spirit is the bond in our relationships

In the relationship between Saul and David and between David and Jonathan we have two contrasting pictures. The story of Saul and David shows us how pride and jealousy can destroy not only relationships but also the persons in that relationship. As for David he respected and loved Saul as a God anointed king. Even though David had an opportunity to kill Saul who was pursuing him to take his life he did not harm Saul as he was anointed by God. In contrast Saul who was rescued by David many times pursued him relentlessly to kill him because of jealousy. He cheated David many times.

The friendship that blossomed between Jonathan and David was a type of friendship that Jesus would have with His disciples. Just as Jonathan risked his life for David and gave his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt to him and made a covenant with David Jesus also gave us, His disciples the glory Father gave Him and made an eternal covenant with us by shedding His blood for us. He even called us His friends not His servants (John 15:4) and loved us to the end. Therefore we need to have the same relationship of love and respect.

To day God is asking us in today's Gospel lesson to show that kind of love that is patient, kind, love that does not envy and boast, love that is not proud, love that is not rude, self-seeking, not easily angered, keeps no record of wrongs love that does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth, love that always protects, always trusts, always hopes, love that never fails but perseveres(I Cor 13:4-8) and grow into perfection

The Gospel lesson: Mathew 5:43-48
The goal of all relationships is likeness of God in our walk

5, 6 and 7 chapters of Mathew's gospel are called Sermon on the Mount. Just like the many modern preachers who are expounding the word as they like the Pharisees and Sadducees of Jesus time used to interpret the Law as they like for their selfish gain and they even added many regulations to the law for their convenience. Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' authentic interpretation of the Law. The Pharisees and Sadducees took pains to follow the law literally. They even never bothered to look after their parents. They expressed love by their lips but never showed any concern to their parents. Jesus taught his

maturing disciples to love even their enemies and pray for them. God is teaching us today that every one of us have to raise to that stage in our relationships. Therefore let all of us aspire to press on to perfection in wisdom, holiness and love which is God's will for all His disciples (Col 3:5-10, Ep4;20-24, Ep 3:15-18).

May God help us to press on to maturity!

Life Application:

1. Those who profess to love God are bound to love their fellow brothers and sisters.
2. The manual for our relationships is 1 Cor 13.
3. Jesus gave His life for us .So we are also bound to lay down our lives for our brothers.