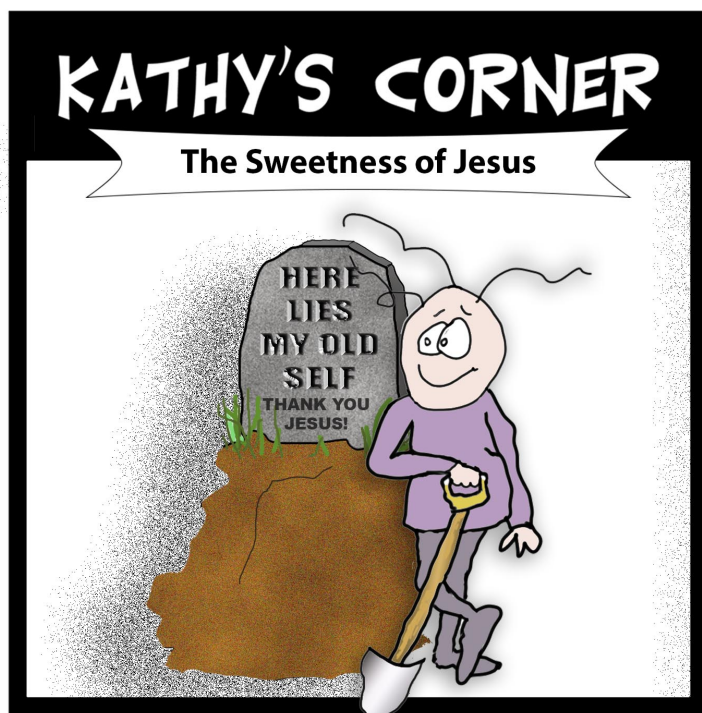


The Sweetness of Jesus

As I pondered the topic for Kathy's Corner this week, an old article kept coming to mind, so I put what I thought I would be writing about on the "back burner" to be addressed at a later date, Lord willing. This is an edited portion of an article written three years ago. I trust the One who called it to mind to make it a blessing to you.

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self. You are being renewed in knowledge according to the image of your Creator. (Colossians 3:9-10 CSB)

What does Christ look like to you? We need an accurate vision of Jesus—His image. That is the image into which we are being transformed. **"So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image."** (2 Corinthians 3:18 NLT)



God has shown us in so many ways what He looks like. Isn't it a joy to know you are becoming more and more like Him as you see Him more clearly, and get to know Him better? Do you see Him—His life in the fruit He bears in your life and in the lives of others that know Him? Do you see Him in compassion and kindness? In speaking truth? In His intercession? Is He desirable to you, His bride to be? **Does He satisfy you more than anything or anyone else?** Do you know His Spirit as Counselor, Comforter, Helper? If we have His Spirit, we have His nature. His nature is to bless; are we are doing the same? This nature is the assurance that it is the Holy Spirit who is in us, leading us.

Have we gotten over the "speedbump" of sin? Jesus took care of that. Don't let the devil try to use it to slow you down any longer. **The Law has been simplified**—*With all your strength, heart, soul and mind, love the Lord your God; and love your neighbor as yourself—treating them as you would like to be treated.* We live now by the perfect law of liberty—freedom. **Our assignment is to be led by the Spirit.** That entails His leading, our obedience. As we are led we become more like Jesus. If your *leading* isn't making you more like Him, it isn't the Holy Spirit leading you, but something or some other unholy spirit. What is clearly good news—the gospel, the enemy tries to complicate. Complications lead to bondage. Jesus **accomplished a simplicity for us. We trust. He comes through.** (Matthew 6:33 Says to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and we will have everything we need.)

In the parable of the Good Samaritan we see two *religious* people who show no concern for the one who was robbed, injured and left for dead. One was a Jewish Priest, the other was a Levite, both had religious duties to perform that they more than likely were concerned about getting done. Thinking their obligations to be more important than a suffering human being, they went on their way. People in a crisis are more important than timely performance of my *religious* duties!

When is it okay to overlook the wounded or neglected, especially our brothers or sisters? We may not assist in exactly the way they expect or desire, but we should be concerned and helpful. Do we only

help those for whom we have an affinity? If we truly believe God has a plan for *each life He has created*, we should include helping those that might be somewhat against our natural liking—even some distasteful to us. Might we even be required to feed our enemies? What helps me when the *feeling* isn't there is to treat others the way I would want to be treated—love others as myself. It is an act of obedience that God will honor.

Jesus was constantly interrupted on His Journey to this place or that. The interruptions were as much ministry as what He would do once he arrived at His destination. He was not inconvenienced by God-ordained interruptions which were an important part of showing people who He was and what He was doing. There would be large portions of the scriptures missing were it not for these “interruptions.” We would have a much smaller picture of the nature of God and of what living a Christian life truly is. **This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.** (From 1 John 2:5, 6 NIV) Living like Jesus means sometimes, many times, we are going against the status quo, not just in the world, but also in religious areas. An interruption or inconvenience may actually be the plan. An interruption may be the opportunity to glorify God in the situation, to show the sweetness of Jesus.

We should be especially mindful not to neglect those in our own household of faith. Some don't shine as brightly as others, **YET**, but given some inclusion, encouragement or training, would they? And those of you who see yourself as neglected, are you wearing a mask so that no one knows what is going on with you? I have certainly been deceived by these masks—thinking all was okay only to find out later that someone felt neglected or worthless. And maybe someone else feels the same. Perhaps you could take the initiative, remember if you give a hug, you get a hug; and the phone goes both ways.

All have gifts and talents to offer. **We need every one**, but the vessel must be useful to God. Do we use our gifts in our own strength or for our own glory, or do we employ these to be a blessing and honor to our Father? **Do we employ these with the sweetness of Jesus?** Is Jesus really Lord? Are we willing to take a back seat so that precious “little ones” are able to let their “little light” shine? If we encourage and pray for them, perhaps they will outshine us; and wouldn't that just be more glory to God, more blessing to all of us! However, as these little ones start to shine they must beware of pride. Remember how much God despises pride and how he honors and blesses the meek and brokenhearted; and remember He promises to lift up those who humble themselves—all in His time.

I remember a passage about Hezekiah. Hezekiah was showing off all the treasures of his kingdom to an envoy sent with a gift from a worshipper of Baal—the king's son from Babylon. **Hezekiah received the envoys gladly and showed them what was in his storehouses—the silver, the gold, the spices, the fine olive oil—his entire armory and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them.** (Isaiah 39:2 NIV) As a result of Hezekiah's pride and carelessness *he sold out his kingdom's future and possessions* to the Babylonians. Are we prideful? Would we admit it? Confess it? Do we think ourselves more capable than others? We all have only what God has given us, so where is the room for boasting?

In searching my own heart, wondering as I strive to be all He has planned for me—coming up short, but not giving up; will I one day stand before Him totally exposed, open to the One who sees and knows all, to be embarrassed that I was less than real in walking in that new life that He has so benevolently provided. Freely I have received forgiveness, mercy and favor. Do I freely extend the same to others—**seventy times seven?**

How far short we come from being a holy vessel if we live even briefly in our flesh. *Our old selves belong in the grave.* God help us to truly honor our Father, our Lord, our Holy Spirit. Self-denial is the key. Self-denial is the humility and the sweetness of Jesus.