

WD January 17, 2022

“Frustration and Faith”

Tricia and I watched an old favorite recently, *Rainman* with Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman. Cruise’s character returns home to Ohio after his father’s death in hopes of receiving a fat inheritance. In short order he finds out he’s got an older brother, Raymond, who has Autism. Dustin Hoffman played the role perfectly. Raymond refuses to fly because of all the recorded crashes. So, they drive their father’s 1949 Buick Roadmaster across the country. In short order they have to drive secondary roads through small towns and country sides because Raymond refuses to be in the car on the freeway after seeing an accident they encounter on the freeway. Raymond cannot travel in the rain so they hold in a hotel. You can feel the frustration building in Cruise’s character.

Finally, in one scene Raymond reveals that he has stopped wearing underwear while driving down the road. He refuses to wear his brother’s undies because they are not from Kmart back in Ohio. Cruise’s character stops the car hops out, slams the door and starts having a moment. “What difference does it make where you buy underwear!” Meanwhile Raymond remains calmly sitting in the car saying, “Kmart”. “Underwear at Kmart.”

The whole scene is hilarious to me but oh so familiar. So many times I find myself frustrated with something. The driver in front of me is going ten miles below the speed limit on 150. The weather person is overdramatizing the dusting of snow that comes on Saturday night. Everything is a “snowpocalypse”. Or maybe I don’t reach a certain goal for the day because I don’t have the right part, or tool, or enough time to get it all done. Ugh! People get frustrated about many things. Do you ever wonder if the Lord gets frustrated with us?

Consider Matthew 16:5-12.

⁵ When they went across the lake, the disciples forgot to take bread. ⁶ “Be careful,” Jesus said to them. “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”

⁷ They discussed this among themselves and said, “It is because we didn’t bring any bread.”

⁸ Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, “You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? ⁹ Do you still not understand? Don’t you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹⁰ Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹¹ How is it you don’t understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” ¹² Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Jesus is trying to teach them about the yeast of the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the disciples are giving a Rainman response. The disciples respond to Jesus’ teaching with “What bread? We don’t have any bread.” “I’m hungry!”

“Focus guys!” The disciples were thick at times. Jesus was trying to teach them something important and they weren’t catching on. And you can sense some frustration with Jesus here. We’ve heard it before in Matthew 15:16. Jesus is teaching that the stuff that comes out of the heart is what makes one unclean or clean. The disciples don’t get it then either and Jesus responds, “You still so dull.”

I wonder sometimes if Jesus gets frustrated with us. How about the excuses we make for avoiding him? How about the dullness of our own minds because we are slow to turn to our Bible’s to know what God actually says about important topics? Or how about our ability to act like the Israelites in the wilderness who complained about everything even as God was giving them everything? I’ll bet we frustrate the Lord plenty.

But notice how Jesus handles His frustration. First, Jesus was patient. Jesus never lets His frustration turn into bitterness towards the disciples. Jesus continued to exercise incredible patience because His love for the disciples was greater than their stupidity. Throughout Jesus’ ministry, Jesus exercises incredible patience towards Peter who is often putting His foot in His mouth, and Thomas who stubbornly held on to his doubt.

Patience then allows Jesus to reach His ultimate goal with the disciples. That goal in Matthew 16 is teach them that the teaching of the religious leaders is like yeast. It will spread throughout the whole batch with even just a little bit of it. It will in fact adulterate even the purest of hearts. Watch out and avoid it. Jesus

wants the disciples to remain in Jesus' teaching and keep away from the false teaching of the pharisees. If Jesus were to vent at the disciples at that moment their minds would close because they would sit there stewing over Jesus' anger rather than learning. The opportunity to teach an important truth would be lost because of impatience. Patience helps keep things focused.

Patience also allows opportunity for correction. The disciples were shamed by Jesus for their dullness but not to the point of a broken spirit. Only enough to change course on their thinking. Jesus wanted them to move from bread and hunger to believing in Jesus. Jesus even urges them to remember Him as the supplier of the bread at the feeding of the 5000. This brief moment of lapsed mindsets is interesting because it has a subtle scent similar to Jesus being tempted in the wilderness in Matthew 4. Satan tempts Jesus to turn the stones into bread because Jesus was hungry. Satan may be working on the minds of the disciples because they are hungry to become distracted and therefore miss the lesson. If even one truth can be missed because of Satan's distractions that would be harmful. This is most likely why Jesus interrupts the disciples' conversation about bread to get them onto a constructive conversation about yeast. Jesus remains patient enough to redirect the disciples.

Jesus gets frustrated but never to the point of losing his mind. Satan skews our hearts and minds so easily and I am sure that this frustrates Jesus when we do. However, the Lord and Savior remains steadfast in His love toward us and continues to keep His focus on our salvation in the cross.

Perhaps then when we become frustrated toward others we may turn to Jesus' example. We will do well to lay the matter in a cushion of grace rather than in a mindset of sudden competition. And let's face it, most of our frustration that we experience are because we have created an expectation in our own heads that we super-impose on others. And when they don't meet our imagined expectations, we blow our tops. And they react to what looks like a blindsided fit of rage. Jesus never imposes anything but clearly states what is expected of us. Jesus remains patient, and in His patience keeps focused on the point, yeast not bread. Teaching not hunger. Growing wise not dull.

If you get frustrated with someone, consider a couple of quick steps. Pray to the Lord that He may redirect your thoughts to another reality--Thank the Lord that He has been patient with you. And then ask, 'Is this worthy of making myself crazy?' If not go back to patience. Shake your head if it helps. Consider redirecting your own thoughts to use the moment as an opportunity to remember the Lord's goodness to you and me. By doing so you may break the hold of the devil and gain a little spiritual wisdom yourself.

Pastor Matt Woods
John 3:30