

Blaming Everyone Else

A city sanitation employee in Lodi, California, sued the city for damages after he backed his garbage truck into his own parked car. The 51-year-old man argued that because the “city’s vehicle damaged my private vehicle,” the city owed him \$3,600. He won.

The branch manager of a bank in Indianapolis was arrested for siphoning off eight thousand dollars a month from various accounts, at least until he was caught. His defense: “I deserved a raise, and the main office wouldn’t give it to me. It was money I was entitled to.” He was convicted of embezzling, the money was returned, and then he counter-sued for the raise, back pay, and psychological damages. He won.

Have you heard of the Pittsburgh man who killed a two year old girl by knocking her out and then putting her outside in freezing weather? Have you heard of his initial response as to why he did it? “She wouldn’t listen when I told her to go to bed.” The abuser blames the child for the abuse.

As ridiculous as these incidents sound, blaming others and demanding that someone else pay for our mistakes have been basic human failings since Creation. When Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree, their eyes were opened, and they lost their innocence. God asked a simple question: “Where are you? In the past, Adam had a close fellowship with God, but now he responded in fear and hid himself.

Adam blamed God and Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. Hiding from God did not remove responsibility for sin. Blaming others did not make them any less deserving of punishment. God’s follow-up question was more convicting than the first: “Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” Bottom line: did you sin? That is all that is relevant. When we sin, we must take responsibility, or the sin will never be removed, and we will never see heaven.

God is Big; We are Small

In a commencement address to a graduating class at Miami University, George Will, one of my favorite columnists, gave some statistics that help to reduce our sense of self-importance. He pointed out that “the sun around which Earth orbits is one of perhaps 400 billion stars in the Milky Way, which is a un-remarkable galaxy next door to nothing much.” He added, “There are perhaps 40 billion galaxies in the still-expanding universe. If all the stars in the universe were only the size of the head of a pin, they still would fill Miami’s Orange Bowl to overflowing more than 3 billion times.”

Did God suddenly get larger in your estimation? Did you suddenly get smaller? Here is a greater wonder than the unimaginable vastness of the universe. The God who created and sustains the cosmos in its incomprehensible immensity loves us. And He doesn’t just love the human race as an entity of billions. He loves us individually.

Astronomically, we are insignificant. But spiritually, we are the beloved objects of God’s love. While we have no reason for pride, we are grateful to the Lord whose love for us is revealed at Calvary’s cross.

Understating Jesus

We can never overstate the greatness of Christ. As the preeminent person in history and in the church, He is worthy of our love and our praise. In his book *The Pursuit of God*, A. W. Tozer paid tribute to Frederick Faber, the Englishman who penned the song “Faith of Our Fathers.” Tozer said of Faber, “His love for the person of Christ was so intense that it threatened to consume him; it burned within him and flowed from his lips like molten gold.” In one of

Faber's sermons, he said, "Wherever we turn in the church of God, there is Jesus. He is the beginning, middle, and end of everything to us. There is nothing good, nothing holy, nothing beautiful, nothing joyous which He is not to His servants. No one need be downcast, for Jesus is the joy of heaven, and it is His joy to enter into sorrowful hearts. We can exaggerate about many things, but we can never exaggerate our obligation to Jesus, or the compassionate abundance of the love of Jesus to us. All our lives long we might talk of Jesus, and yet we should never come to an end of the sweet things that might be said of Him." When we submit to Jesus' lordship, we'll give Him more than just our worship; we will give Him our lives.

Out of Reach

How do we react to hostile criticism? If it causes us to retort angrily at our critics, we need to learn a lesson from colonial preacher Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758). Regarded by scholars as an insightful thinker and speaker, Edwards was vindictively attacked by the ruling body of the church he served in Northampton, Massachusetts. They insisted he was wrong to teach that a person needed to be baptized before taking the Lord's Supper. Although he was dismissed from his church, Edwards still maintained a kind, patient attitude. One supportive member wrote of him, "I never saw the least symptoms of displeasure in his countenance, but he appeared like a man of God, whose happiness was out of the reach of his enemies." A profound thought: "His happiness was out of reach of his enemies." Out of reach of the circumstances of our lives; out of reach of the world around us; out of reach of our burdens...

Edwards was simply copying the example of Jesus. When the Savior was insulted, He did not repay with an insult. When He was falsely denounced, He remained silent, "as a sheep before its shearers is silent" (Isa. 53:7).

A Moments Wisdom

- Parenting is the one job where the better you are the less you will have to do it in the long run.
- It is possible to give everything away and become richer. It is also possible to hold on too tightly and lose it all.
- Do not mistake activity for accomplishment.
- Failure to hit the bullseye is never the fault of the target.
- Remember: God will always have the last word.
- I am the inferior of any man whose rights I trample underfoot.
- Sin arises out of mistrust. Man is afraid to trust the divine destiny and to accept his limits. The rebellion that follows is a decisive act of repudiation, a trusting of self over against God.
- He came to save us, not from poverty or from ignorance or from the ghetto, but from our sins. Sin must be dealt with first.
- The New Testament is the history of the life and the testimony of common men who rallied to the fellowship of Jesus Christ and who by their faith and preaching remade a world that was under the thrall of a Roman army. (Woodrow Wilson, Address, May 1911)
- The Old Testament teaching about God's wrath finds its logical expression in the statement of the Psalmist: "His wrath is for a moment, His faithfulness life-long" Psalm 30:6.
- God made Sun and Moon to distinguish seasons, and day and night, and we cannot have the fruits of the earth but in their seasons: But God hath made no decree to distinguish the seasons of His mercies. In Heaven it is always Autumn harvest; His mercies are ever in their maturity. (John Donne, 1624)