

Friday, September 4, 2020

On being interrogated

- Pastor Hank French

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:1-2).

There are some great words in this text—words well worth meditating on. Humility, gentleness, patience, love. The writer of Ephesians is suggesting that these are the qualities, the characteristics, the marks of Christians who “lead a life worthy of the calling to which [they] have been called” by God.

Humility—or as Paul said in Philippians, not doing anything from “selfish ambition or conceit” and regarding others as having the same value in the eyes of God as you do. Humility is one of what Paul calls “the fruit of the Spirit.”

Gentleness—which is a synonym for kindness, another much needed human quality that Paul identifies as one of “fruit of the Spirit.” It is also, according to a Hebrew prophet, one of the three things that God wants from us— “to do justice, to love kindness, to walk humbly with [our] God.”

Patience—another quality that Paul identifies as “a fruit of the Spirit.” Patient people are those who don’t take themselves so seriously that they can’t tolerate not getting what they want immediately, nor can they tolerate what they perceive to be a lack of intelligence or ability on the part of others. In other words, patient folks are other-centered rather than self-centered.

Bearing with one another in love—and love, of course is another of Paul’s “fruit of the Spirit.” Love ties all these words—humility, gentleness and patience—together. As Paul put it in 1 Corinthians: “Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth.”

An honest encounter with a biblical text puts us under a spotlight. If, that is, we allow the text to interrogate us. Today’s text is a good example.

I can’t read it without hearing the text ask me “How humble are you? Are you self-centered or other-centered?”

I can’t read it without hearing the text ask me “How gentle are you? Are you self-centered or other-centered?”

I can’t read it without hearing the text ask me “How patient are you? Are you self-centered or other-centered?”

I can’t read it without hearing the text ask me “How loving are you? Are you self-centered or other-centered?”

In 1645, a Japanese sage named Miyamoto Musashi wrote: “Think lightly of yourself and deeply of the world.” Today’s text asks me “Do you think lightly of yourself and deeply of the world?”

Prayer: God of all wisdom, teach me to meditate on humility, gentleness, patience, and love and help me to let those beautiful, profound words interrogate me. Amen.