

Love and Justice

Matthew 22:36-40

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second I like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.”

I. Religious people often confuse love and justice in personal relationships and love and justice in the political realm.¹

A. Christians: Jesus taught love your enemy; turn the other cheek; don't resist evil. That teaching of Jesus has often, especially since the post-Reformation rise of the Anabaptists and Quakers, been interpreted by Christians to mean that people should be pacifists, that no one should perform a violent act in personal defense or in the service of a country.

1. Just war theory: Augustine and Thomas Aquinas – the exception to the trend. Here the personal ethic of love and justice is not confused with the political ethic of love and justice.

2. Christianity, although introducing the father/son relationship of God to His children, still does not know the true condition of God's heart: Sorrow, tears, frustrated hopes, and dreams.

a. Therefore, Christianity can't precisely understand God's Providence.

B. Buddhist teaching is utterly detached from feeling a sense of responsibility in the political realm. It focuses upon overcoming personal desire; penetrating the veil of maya; attaining nirvana – returning as a Bodhisatva to liberate all people.

1. Those are noble goals, especially the latter, of the devotees of Buddhism. But the necessity for love and justice in the political realm is neither taught nor practiced, although there have been isolated exceptions in history (Korean Buddhism, for example).

C. Confucianism: although considered by many not to be a religion in the proper sense of the word, Confucianism demonstrates an acute understanding of the necessity for love and justice in the political or social realm.

1. Philosophical instructions: Filial piety; parental love; loyalty of the subject for the ruler; benevolence of rule to the subject; etc.
 2. The weakness of Confucianism is that it does not grasp the essential nature of God: Parental heart of love, tears, and sorrow.
 - a. Hence, it is impossible for Confucianism to ascertain the precise movements of God in His Providential history.
- II. It is impossible for Christianity, Confucianism, or Buddhism to precisely understand God's Providential movement in history and act truly responsibly, personally or politically, without knowing about God's suffering heart.
- A. Love and justice in the personal realm meshes snugly with love and justice in the political realm when one realizes, through religious experience and religious teaching, that:
 1. God is our true parents.
 2. God's heart is overflowing with tears and sorrow for His lost children.
 3. History is the story of God's attempt to establish the Kingdom of God on earth and in the spiritual world.
 - B. The ultimate goal of God is not simply that everyone experiences His heart individually, in his personal family or clan, but that everyone experience His heart in the wider world community; among the races and nations of the world. The establishment of the heavenly community among all races and nations, the Kingdom of heaven on the earth, is the endeavor of God in history.
 1. Living together in the world is the most difficult task. It is easy to say "I love God but I can't stand the sight of people different from myself," but that is missing the mark of God's hope for us.
 - a. God wants all people of the world to live together in love in community:
 - i. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17)
 - ii. The Great Commandment: Love God and love your neighbor (Matthew 22:36-40).
 - C. Religious people have been generally missing the mark by concentrating their efforts solely upon achieving experience, or by limiting their acting out of the Great Commandment to a small circle of people (i.e., family, clan, or tribe), without acting out God's love among all people.

1. Jesus: Kingdom of God within; not of this world. Escapism.
 2. Monasticism
 - a. The rise of Islam as a judgment against irresponsible early Christianity.
 3. That has tended to lead them to act irresponsibly and unrealistically in the political realm.
 - a. They let evil happen. That is not love and justice in history.
 - b. Love and justice in history stands against those who try to deter the realization of the Kingdom of God.
- D. Religious people have to ask the questions: Do certain events in history help to bring the Kingdom of God on the earth, or do they hinder the coming of the Kingdom of God?
1. That is the central question of love and justice in history.
 2. Many religious people in the USA tend to be absolutist in ethical judgments on political behavior.
 - a. They tend not to ask the question whether God's Kingdom will be advanced or deterred by certain events. They don't want to get involved or they don't want to have dealings with governments that do not live up to their own standards of democracy. However, steps toward democracy are more in the direction of the Kingdom of heaven than steps toward communism.
 - i. El Salvador. The effort to disengage US aid to El Salvador is an act of moral evasion – irresponsible utopianism disguised as moral realism. Instead of supporting the people of El Salvador's attempt to remain free and to strive toward democracy, many moral perfectionists in the USA wish to abandon El Salvador to the Soviet and Cuban backed guerrillas. Clearly a step away from God's Kingdom on the earth.
 - ii. Nuclear Freeze Movement. Those who support the freeze movement may be helping to create a situation in which the Soviet Union can use nuclear blackmail to gain their goal of world domination – a disastrous step away from God's Kingdom.
 - iii. Afghanistan. Abandonment of an economically and technically poor country of fervently religious people to a Satanic power. A clear step away from God's Kingdom.

3. The democratic model of government is closer to the Kingdom of heaven than the communistic model of government. The democratic model of government is not the Kingdom of God but it is in the right direction because every individual's right to believe and act toward God as they wish to protected by law; not so in the Soviet Union. The USA's responsibility is to resist Soviet expansionism.

III. Love is not a mushy emotion.

A. Love is care for others.

1. Love is taking responsibility for others.
2. Love is standing up for what is just and what is fair.
3. Love is helping those who are weaker than you and resisting those who take advantage of others.

B. Love is not watching someone being murdered in front of your eyes.

1. Love is not watching weaker persons or nations being abused by stronger, selfish, even Satanically motivated nations.

C. Love requires:

1. Justice.
2. Responsibility.
3. Diligence.
4. Virtue.

CONCLUSION

A. Love and justice demand not only that we love our enemy and that we lead religious lives personally, but that we consider God's movement to establish His Kingdom on the earth and that we act in accordance with His suffering heart and providence.

1. Satan not only got control over each individual with the fall of Adam and Eve, but he also got control over all nations.
 - a. Just as God is leading persons to separate from Satan in their personal lives:
 - i. by learning to live sacrificially for all people of all colors of all nations (even at the cost of one's live, if necessary).
 - ii. by loving God totally.
 - b. So He is also guiding nations to separate from Satan:

- i. by learning to live sacrificially for other nations (over-coming ethnocentrism in foreign relations), laying down the nation's life for the sake of righteousness and goodness, if necessary.
- ii. by becoming fundamentally God centered.

¹ This dialectic is taken from the work of Reinhold Niebuhr, especially his Nature and Destiny of Man and Love and Justice, a collection of Niebuhr's essays. Much inspiration for this sermon was received from the work of Reinhold Niebuhr but most of the substance and its arrangement is new.