When God is Pleased, we hear and see his Affirming Love

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And a voice came from heaven saying, ‘You are my son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’ — Luke 3:22. Out of the crowd, Jesus had come to his cousin John the Baptist to be baptized and suddenly there came God’s voice affirming His love for Him. In Luke and Mark’s version of this scripture, the words were spoken to Christ, “You are my son, whom I love,” but in Matthew’s version, the words are spoken of Him, “This is my beloved son.”

But all mean essentially the same, “I love you, my son” and/or “This is the son I love.” God speaks so that John and the other people who were questioning John’s identity would know who Christ was. Likewise, this also answered John’s private prayer, which was to know for sure this was the Christ, the one foretold of by the prophets.

Earlier, the people had asked John if he was the one, and John said, “No. The Messiah would do more than baptize you with water, He will baptize you with the Holy Ghost, He will give the Holy Spirit to cleanse and purify our hearts.”

This means John knew the scope, authority and limits of His earthly mission. He knew and understood the historical role he was to play. As the greatest prophet, John also already knew of the Holy Spirit and of the redeeming grace of the Christ.

John’s preaching could only threaten the hypocrites and unrepentant but Christ would be able to execute all of John’s threats against those who were vain and worthless. John’s preaching pressed things upon the hearts of his listeners. John’s preaching followed God’s doctrine. It was practical, it reminded us of our duty, it directed us and it wasn’t filled with amusing speculation, unlike what many preachers do today. Despite all of this truth, John was popular, with the Scribes, the Pharisees and Sadducees and regular people, for all came to hear him.

When we preach about duty, we must direct people to Christ. It is only Christ who can speak comfort to the righteous, saying to them, “All will be well.” John reminds us in Luke 3:17 that Christ is “the fan to separate the wheat from the chaff.”

Christ will gather only the wheat into His barns, the good, serious people who have sincerely followed Him and His teachings; these are the ones who will hear and see God’s affirming love.

Today, so many of us are doing things we know don’t please God. We live life in an angry, hateful and evil way, then expect to be blessed, thinking because we have honored some biblical passage (which we probably have taken out of context). We look to heaven expecting to hear affirming words of love from God, only to find, instead, evil raining down.

In Luke 3:19, we read John’s rebuke of Herod, not only for living in incest with his brother Philip’s wife but for many other evils, as well. Those who are wicked in one instance are generally wicked in others. Herod couldn’t bear John’s preaching anymore so he locked him up and then had him beheaded. But by the time this happened, it was too late to alter God’s plans, for out of the crowd had already come an itinerant carpenter from Nazareth seeking to be baptized, Jesus the Christ.

We must not think Herod did all of this evil without some divine counsel, which neither he nor we know little of. Why silence “the voice crying in the wilderness?” Why shut up such a great preacher?

Well, because the faith of John’s disciples had to be tested and the unbelief of those who rejected John’s preaching had to be punished. Therefore, just as John had been the forerunner in preaching Christ’s coming, John also had to be a forerunner in a suffering like Christ’s. So now at

age 30 Jesus was ready to begin His earthly ministry, at the same age as Joseph when he stood before Pharaoh (Genesis 41:46), and David when he began his reign (II Samuel 5:4) and, oddly enough, the same age priests were to start their official ministerial service (Numbers 4:3).

When the sun rises, the morning star disappears. When all these things happened, the people knew God was pleased and they could hear and see God's affirming love.

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