

The Plain, Unvarnished Truth

In Luke 17:5-10, Jesus spoke the truth in love. The disciples were looking for a little recognition for how religious they were. So in response, Jesus told of servants who came in from working in the fields. Jesus asked the disciples if they would tell the servants, "Sit down here and let me fix you dinner." No, the servants' jobs were to prepare the food and serve it, so the disciples would expect them to do that. In our time, it might be like hiring caterers for a party. They come in and serve the food, but the whole time they are muttering under their breath "When we got here, not one person invited us to sit down and eat!" Jesus' message probably wasn't too popular with the disciples. In essence, He was saying, "Why are you looking for recognition when you have just done what is expected of you? The servant is expected to serve. The caterer is expected to cater. How can you want praise when you are only doing what you are supposed to do?" This isn't sugar coated. There isn't any honey to be found. Jesus gave them honest, bare truth.

We make mental lists of the good things we've done: "I've served on three committees, chaired one of them, been elected to the board, worked on houses for the poor, went to the soup kitchen once, helped with my daughter's soccer team, and taught Sunday School. I've even been nice to the strange neighbors next door." We can almost hear the silent voice from heaven saying, "That's nice, but that's what you are supposed to be doing." Jesus' comments bring us back to what we are called to be. When we go to church, reach out to people in need, visit a lonely shut-in, we are not building up credits on a ledger with our name on it, we're doing what Christians are supposed to do. It's kind of like showing up for work! "I went to the soup kitchen and helped prepare food, and served it, and even stayed to clean up." ... Well, of

course you did. "All week long I've been working with the kids at vacation bible school, they can really be a handful!" ... Yes. "I went to church three weeks in a row!" ... Naturally. Sometimes we need to hear the uncoated, unsweetened truth. Part of the truth is what Jesus says here: "Don't expect great rewards for just doing what you're supposed to do." This goes against the grain of our culture. For what you do as a Christian you may receive a Distinguished Service Award, or be elected Woman or Man of the Year. But within the Christian community it's more like, "Good job. That's what we're all about."

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