

Spiritual Harmony

This past Wednesday evening was a sweet time of fellowship at Berean. The *a cappella* songs seemed to magnify the truth that God has made each of us a unique and integral part of this beautiful symphony of life. Each added voice gave increased depth and richness to the words of truth set to music and the many layered harmonies multiplied the beauty of the praise given to our great God. This acoustic harmony extended further into spiritual harmony as each of our brethren stepped to the microphone to give thanks. These raw and honest testimonies displayed how God's provision for us so often contains the harmony of both pain and joy. In the same way that complex music is made complete only when all the harmonic layers are added, so too the complex work of God is only perfected and completed when all the layers are added: pain, trial, suffering layered upon love, joy, hope, and peace. These form the harmony of living.

One testimony in particular caused me to think deeply on these things since Wednesday evening. Grace Musallam shared her thankfulness for a growing dissatisfaction with the world. I was immediately struck that Grace did not thank God for *removing* her dissatisfaction with the world, but *for the dissatisfaction itself*. What a maturity this is! It is God's gift to us that, at some point in our lives, we will become dissatisfied with the vanity and futility of the world around us. For the unsaved it is quite likely that this dissatisfaction will drive him to attempt to remove or fill his inner void by striving for the "good life." In the worst cases, this dissatisfaction leads to debauchery and hedonism (for example, compare the fruit of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians Chapter 5). In the best cases, this dissatisfaction may lead one to fill his inner void with education, personal achievement, work productivity, loving companionship, or benevolence toward fellow man. However, filling life with even these "good" things, apart from God, will inevitably lead to despair and emptiness.

One of the many places in Scripture that expresses the futility of life apart from God is from the heart of David in Psalm 39:4-7.

O LORD, make me know my end and what is the measure of my days; let me know how fleeting I am! Behold, you have made my days a few handbreadths, and my lifetime is as nothing before you. Surely all mankind stands as a mere breath! Selah. Surely a man goes about as a shadow! Surely for nothing they are in turmoil; man heaps up wealth and does not know who will gather! And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.

The futility is clear. We are driven, as all men are, to seek meaning and purpose in our lives. We are driven to dissatisfaction with the inadequacies of the world around us, and we attempt to fill that God-given inner longing for meaning and value. Our lives appear as a fleeting breath; we see ourselves as a brief spark in the vast rolling eternity. However, instead of ending in hopelessness, David expresses the response that a follower of God will have to this dissatisfaction of life: *And now, O Lord, for what do I wait? My hope is in you.* We who have been redeemed by Christ have a dramatically different view of this world around us. The pain, suffering, and brokenness of this world stand in sharp relief against the goodness of God and the everlasting hope we have in him!

And so we see the maturity of Grace's statement of thanksgiving. We are not to seek to remove our dissatisfaction with the world around us; instead we are to embrace this dissatisfaction as a harmonic layer of our life. As Paul expresses in Romans Chapter 8, the

creation itself testifies to its own incompleteness and futility (8:19-20), and we eagerly await the full satisfaction of all of creation via our final redemption (8:23), of course knowing that all of the existing pain, suffering, trial, and brokenness are working for the good of those who have placed their trust in Christ (8:28). This perfect working of God can satisfy us *today*, but only through our faith in the promises of God, assured by his steadfast love, and offered to us only via the life, death, and resurrection of his perfect son, Jesus.

Therefore, beloved Bereans, may we never be satisfied with the things of this world—a world that God never intended to satisfy the deepest longings of our soul. I pray we truly enjoy the great blessings, and even the comforts, of this life as we think upon those blessings this Thanksgiving week. However, let us be cautious against becoming spiritually pacified by the temporary pleasures that beckon to satisfy us. I pray, instead, that we seek and find deep joy that comes from intimately knowing and loving our Father and embracing the life he has woven for us, including the suffering and pain.

This week in particular, let us give God deep thanks for how he layers harmony upon harmony in our lives to create the perfect song, knowing that he orders *all things* to accomplish his perfect purpose for us, his adopted children.

Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of men! For he satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things. – Psalm 107:8-9

This is best life that promises true satisfaction and fulfillment. May we rest solely on the steadfast love of our Heavenly Father and trust his ways.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Pastor Aaron