

LOVE COMES FROM GOD

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. . . “ (1 Jn 4:7)

I awoke this morning pondering the fact that God has so often communicated to man by dreams. A long list can easily be compiled. God gave dreams to Abimelech, Jacob, Laban, Joseph, the butler, the baker, Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Joseph with the coat of many colors, and Joseph the husband of Mary, the wise men from the East, etc. Why? I keep asking myself, did God choose to do this? Dreams seem so difficult to remember and are so subjective. On the surface, dreams don't seem like a very accurate way of communicating.

While I don't claim to have the answer, I am pondering the possibility that by means of dreams God by-passes our normal thought processes and communicates directly to that “inner man” that determines our course of action. Every day we weigh evidence and make decisions based upon our own best judgement. Our experience in this fallen world has given us a hardened and calloused perspective. By means of a dream God can by-pass this facade and penetrate this veneer. The wise men came to Bethlehem as a result of years of in-depth study and investigation. They left Bethlehem because God warned them in a dream to do so (Matt. 2:12). There is a dramatic difference between the way these two different decisions were made.

Perhaps an analogy can be made between these God given dreams and love. No man goes to bed planning what kind of a dream he is going to have, for the dreams we are talking about come directly from God. Note again the words of our text: “love comes from God”. Please consider the possibility that just as God gives dreams to direct the course of man's behavior, He also gives love for the same reason.

Even though we are commanded to love God, and commanded to love our neighbor (Matt. 22:37 - 40), there is a sense in which this cannot be done correctly without divine help. The love of which we speak is called the “fruit” of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Man can make something that looks like fruit, and tastes like fruit, but real fruit only comes from God. Thus man can pretend to care, and force himself to say nice words, but love still comes from God.

As we search the world for treasures, this love that comes from God stands alone. It is like the pearl of great price and it is worth giving all that we have to possess it. It is the singular way that the world has to identify the true followers of Christ. Focus again on these words of Jesus: **“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35)**

This love of which we speak is not a normal kind of love. Jesus said: “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them.” (Luke 6:32) The love of which we speak causes us to love our enemies and bless those who curse us. It creates in us a desire to do good to them who hate us and to pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us. This kind of love does not come by memorizing a set of facts or taking a course in college. This love comes from God!

There is, as you know, a definite distinction between “knowledge” and “love”. One “puffs up” and the other “builds up” (1 Cor. 8:1). It is obvious that unity of believers can never be accomplished on the basis of knowledge. There never has been, and there never will be, an equal distribution of knowledge. Even when there were only two people on earth Adam knew things that Eve didn't know. It would be foolish to think otherwise. God taught Adam to dress and keep the garden, and Adam gave names to every living creature before Eve was even created. So the world will never know that we belong to Jesus because of our knowledge. Some of us are children. Others are illiterate. Many have never had the opportunity to go to school. Yet the world knows who we are because God has placed His love in the heart of every true believer.

The miracle of this love that comes from God is beautifully expressed by Paul: **“I speak the truth in Christ-- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit--I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race.” (Rom 9:1-3)**

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!