

Honest to God, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 17070923
Jeremiah 8:18-9:1 and Luke 16:1-13
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If we were honest to God, we would ask God some questions. “God, why is there suffering in the world?”

“God, why don’t you make the Shiites and Sunnis stop fighting?”

“God, why do children turn to drugs, and marijuana?”

“God, how can you let adults engage in child pornography and sexual abuse?”

“God, why don’t you punish these evil people?”

If we were honest to God, we would begin our faith journey with some doubts, doubting either God’s goodness, for God allows evil to happen, or God’s power, for God does not stop the evil from happening.

If we were honest to God, we would ask the same questions that the poor people of Jeremiah’s day asked. Jeremiah lived six hundred years before Jesus was born. He was a prophet which means not a foreteller of the future, but a spokesperson for God. In his book of the Bible we hear the poor asking the question, “Is the Lord not in Zion? Is her King not in her?”¹ They doubted, long before we did, the existence of God, that God was good, or that God had any power.

The poor people of Jeremiah’s day were being treated unjustly, as if no one cared. The leaders of business and government were too concerned with making money. Jeremiah said, “from the least to the greatest everyone is greedy for unjust gain.”² “They acted shamefully, they committed abomination; yet they were not at all ashamed, they did not know how to blush.”³ They sacrificed their sons and daughters on the fires of the altars in the valley of Hinnom.⁴

Things were not going well in the land, and people were getting hurt. Jeremiah saw all of this, and he spoke for God. God was hurt. God never asked for human sacrifice. He always wanted his people, the little people especially, to be treated justly, as if they had value. “How much will God take?” Jeremiah asked. The nation will be destroyed, not by God’s mighty hand, perhaps not even by the armies of foreign countries waiting outside the borders, but by the rot from the inside.

If we were honest to God, we would admit that we know the answer to the questions. We ask about the fighting in Iraq, about the use of drugs and alcohol, and about child abuse. The answer is that it is easy to worship things other than God. It is easy to put our own comfort first and to protect what we think we have earned for ourselves— what we have struggled so hard to achieve. Have we no shame? Do we not know how to blush? We, too, sacrifice our children on the burning altars of the gods of money and power when we crank out the movies and the computer games that depict violence as the way to resolve differences and when we fail to spend time with our children because we are too busy earning more money.

Yes, God weeps for God’s people. The cries of the dying in the death camps of Nazi Germany were heard by God. The tears of the victims of abuse and violence are blotted by a

¹Jeremiah 8:19

²Jeremiah 8:10

³Jeremiah 8:12

⁴Jeremiah 7:31

loving God. Does this all mean that we worship a weak God? Who wants a weak God? There must be some answers here somewhere.

If we were honest to God, we would admit that we don't understand what Jesus was saying in the Parable of the unjust manager in Luke. Was Jesus telling us to make deals by lying and cheating in order that we can have an eternal home? Yes he was, but remember that Jesus had a sense of humor. Some of his humor was sarcasm. Yes! Make friends by means of dishonest wealth, so that when it is gone, your friends will welcome you into their eternal homes.⁵ It is good to have friends, but if your friends are dishonest, do you want to live where they live eternally? Do you want to spend eternity with people who are not accountable to anyone else? Do you want to spend eternity surrounded by those whom you do not know if they are telling you the truth or lies?

Jesus said that our actions have consequences. We will be judged by the way we judge. We will be forgiven in the same way we forgive. We will live eternally by the way we live here. I would not want to live eternally with people who make their wealth dishonestly. I want to live with God eternally, and so I am going to serve God eternally.

We cannot serve two masters. The dishonest manager wasn't serving the owner well. He was squandering the owner's wealth, perhaps by embezzling and perhaps by throwing lavish parties for his friends.

If we were honest to God, we would understand that God is all powerful, and God is all good, but God has chosen to hold back. God has chosen to share power with us, because that's the kind of owner that God is. We can choose to serve that kind of owner, that kind of God— a God who is loving, caring, and sharing. It is that kind of God who cries tears when God sees people hurting one another. It is that kind of God who cries out, "is there no balm in Gilead to heal my people?"⁶ Is there no health plan for the poor and the powerless of my people?

Or, we can choose to serve the god of power and wealth, might, and retribution. We can worship the god of power, corruption, and arbitrariness—and that is where we will spend eternity: but we can not have it both ways.

We cannot worship two gods. I want to live forever with the God that Jesus has shown me, a God who, though he had power and might and who could have destroyed his enemies, instead gave up his own life on a cross for you, for me and for all of creation.

I worship a God who cares about all people. I will do my best to provide balm for hurting people. I know that God provides balm for me when I hurt. People do care, people do share, people are there for me. I will be there for others.

I choose to serve the God of Jesus of Nazareth who gave up his life so that you and I can have eternal life in his home.

⁵Luke 16:9

⁶Jeremiah 8:22