

An Invitation: The Pathway to Humility

Matthew 6:1-6; 16-21

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Tonight as the sun sets
and dusk turns to darkness,
we gather around this table
to be forgiven,
sustained, and nourished...
for a journey we might just decide to take.

Tonight as dusk turns to darkness,
Jesus—the light of the world,
the light of our world,
has set his face toward Jerusalem.

Can you see him?

Can you see him...
over there
in the shadows
with that far, far look in his eyes?

Can you see him...
in the clearing at the crossroads?
shifting from foot to foot,
looking down at his sandals,
waiting for something...
maybe for you
maybe me.

You see,
you don't have to go...

You don't...

We are not forced
or "guilted" into following him.
There are no forced marches.

We don't have to go
to that far-off place.

We don't have to go
 through the shadow of death.
We don't have to go.

In fact, you could fake it this year
 (no one would really know).

We could just show off our spirituality
 and make people think we're religious.
We can subtly brag about our good deeds
 and impress people with our piety.
We can just say long-winded prayers
 and boast about our fasting;
 about what we're giving up for Lent.

You really don't have to do Lent this year.
 You and I can just go through the motions
 or cash in our holy investments
...of grace...and just sit this one out.

But then there's Jesus again
 over there in the shadows...
 Can you see him?
 right over there...

See him
getting ready to set off willingly
 to suffer,
 to be compassion,
 to love extravagantly,
 to relinquish with abandon.

That invitation,
 the one in your hand,
 that Lenten invitation—

Don't decide too quickly.
 This invitation,
 this journey,
 this pathway of humility,
 might just cost you everything:
 your reputation,
 your self image,
 your idea of security.

This pathway of humility...
might scramble your politics,
might mess with your values,
might shake up your world view.

You don't have to go...you don't...
because Jesus will go for you.

Prayer of Invitation to Lent

Okay, Jesus, so we *really* don't have to go?
You will walk that lonesome valley for us? *Really?*

You will *choose* to walk the path of humility
and you will give us the *choice*?
and you only extend an invitation? *Really?*

To be honest, some of us need to sit this year out;
we're whittled down, saturated with grief,
and blistered by broken promises.

Some of us really try to be real,
work to be authentic,
try to be faithful...
and well, we can't this year.

Okay, Jesus, so we really don't *have* to go?
But maybe some of us do.
Maybe some of us want to;
maybe some of us
will walk with you,
and some of us
will walk for our friends who can't.

Give us grace to accept your invitation,
and we will join you in the shadows over there...
together we slip into the shadows,
together we can turn toward Jerusalem...

And Jesus,
If we should get lost from one another along the way?
We'll meet you on that Thursday again at the table...
that night when the sun sets
and dusk turns to darkness.