

Devotion 45:

Our Father Associates With The Lowly

Luke 1—24

Sometimes a message becomes clearer when it is put into relation with its intended audience. The Gospel of Luke is written to a Gentile Roman official, Theophilus, who was probably of great wealth and high standing. Luke refers to him as “*most excellent*,” (1:3) a designation used only for governors elsewhere in the New Testament. By juxtaposition, Luke highlights the lowly, the downtrodden, and the sinful in his Gospel. And he basically claims that our Father readily welcomes such people. It should be noted that the Jews considered Gentiles such as Theophilus to be “sinners.”

The Gospel account begins with an elderly barren couple, reminiscent of Abraham and Sarah, who become the parents of John the Baptist. Then a young virgin, Mary, is brought into the story:

*“My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant.” 1:46-47*

Only two disciples’ call is specifically mentioned by Luke: Peter, who replied to Jesus, “*Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!*” (5:8) and Matthew, a tax collector and “sinner.” (5:30) The next character to be presented is a blue-collar centurion:

*“He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say
to him: ‘Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you
come under my roof.’” 7:6*

Then Jesus helps a grieving widow at her son’s funeral (7:12), is anointed by a sinful woman (7:37), and heals a demon-possessed man (8:36). When synagogue authorities question his associations, Jesus answers them:

*“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not
come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” 5:31*

Even the parables used by Jesus in Luke point to our Father’s having mercy and a tender heart toward the lowly. The mustard seed, the great banquet, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son, the rich man and Lazarus, the good Samaritan, the persistent widow, and the prayers of the Pharisee and the tax collector all show our Father’s heart leaning toward the lowly. And most of these parables are found only in Luke.

It is in this Gospel where Jesus uses a little child as an object lesson on greatness (9:48), tells his disciples to “*let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them*” (18:16), teaches a Pharisee’s dinner guests to choose the lowest seat (14:10), and praises a poor widow’s temple offering (21:2).

Miracles are performed for a man who lost his only daughter (8:42), a man whose only child has convulsions (9:38), a crippled woman (13:11), ten lepers (17:12), and a blind beggar (18:35).

The reoccurring theme is Jesus continually stoops to love the lowly, the weak, the poor. Again, like Father, like Son:

“Though the Lord is on high, he looks upon the lowly, but the proud he knows from afar.” Psalm 138:6

“The lowly he sets on high, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.” Job 5:11

“He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.” I Cor. 1:28

One of the hardest events growing up for me was the playground at recess time when the two strong, athletic captains would choose teams. Of course, the powerful teammates were chosen first and everyone hoped to avoid the ignominious degradation of being selected last. Sometimes it was so bad that the captains tried to manipulate it so they weren't stuck with the very worst prospect. The opposite is the case with our Father. In His playground, *“the last shall be first.”* (Mk. 10:31)

Do you feel lowly today? Maybe a spouse has left you for another. Maybe a child has chosen to take sides with the other divorced parent. Maybe others at the workplace are praised while you are overlooked. Maybe you are constantly surrounded by others who are more intelligent, better looking, more popular, and more content than you. At church, maybe others appear to know the Bible better, pray more often, have more spiritual gifts, and sin less frequently. Well, take heart. Our Father wants you, for He readily associates with the lowly.