

In God's Hands
Archbishop Desmond Tutu
Thursday 26 November 2015

The following are extracts or paraphrases from chapter 5: It's all of Grace

Earning success and appreciation

- a. The result of (the success ethic) is that people boast of how they do not remember when they last had a holiday. In such an environment, stomach ulcers become status symbols, as they are signs of just how hard one is working.
- b. We order things so that, from an early age, our children reckon their worth is not innate, it is not intrinsic, or something that comes with the package, but it is something that we can earn and, since it is extrinsic, can improve. (Their worth) is determined by external attributes.

But contrast this with the love of God

- c. Most frequently, mother and father *want* a baby and, even if the infant is delicate and requires constant medical care and demands all of the mother's time, it really is wonderful to behold just how utterly self-giving the mother almost always is... I think that that is probably the best image of the divine love – loving through self-donation, from the beginning of the baby's life to its very end.
- d. God loves us, not because we are lovable, but rather ... we are lovable only because God first loves us.
- e. God loves us, God loves me, not because we could render to God what God lacked. God is fullness of being, needing nothing outside God in order to be God. God could have been God without us, without the rest of creation. But God decided otherwise. We were thus created as an act of divine grace, a free gift not to be earned – in fact, unearnable, because we were not there to give God the price of creating us.

God loves us through His grace - He does not need us

- f. God the Father pours out all of the loving of the Father to ... the Son, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, (who) returns that eternally outpoured love in equal measure, and the love that flows between them is God the Holy Spirit. God needed nothing outside of the Godhead in order to be God.
- g. God did not need us... God wanted us. God was, and is, totally self-sufficient ... God created us, God created the world from an amazing outpouring of the divine love.

Receiving grace

- h. If we have been brought up in an environment that values achievement at any cost, over and above the worth of simply being human, we find it extremely difficult to be comfortable with the ethos of grace – sheer gift.

Response to grace

- i. Having been lavished with this gift, which is then followed by that other act of sheer grace, the self-giving of Jesus on the cross, all we are expected to do is be thankful in accepting our freely given gift.
- j. We who are freely loved and thus affirmed are meant to be as God to others.

Questions

1. Which of the selected passages above most speaks to you? Why?
2. What is it that Archbishop Tutu describes as grace – the grace we have all received?
3. “Stomach ulcers become status symbols as they are signs of just how hard one is working”
 - a. *Do you recognize this phenomenon?*
 - b. *How might we help break the cycle?*
4. “We find it extremely difficult to be comfortable with the ethos of grace – of sheer gift. It must certainly be very difficult for those who have never lacked for anything, who have not known what it is to be without, then to experience the exhilaration of being given – of being offered a gift.”
 - a. *Do you agree that it is wealth that makes it hard to receive?*
 - b. *Why is it so much harder to receive than to give?*
 - c. *Jesus said that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven: why should this be so?*
5. How can you “be as God to others”?