

Pastor's Corner

The Greater Good

May 13, 2009

Dear Friend,

Last week we talked about unanswered prayers, where sometimes God does not answer a person's prayer in order to answer another person's prayer. If you missed it you can read it here, *Unanswered Prayers*. But this week I want to talk with you about something I call the "Greater Good." This phrase is usually used in reference to utilitarianism, which is based on the concept of the greatest good for the greatest number of people. But I want to use the phrase and apply it to us as individuals and our growth in holiness.

So many times my idea of a successful day is when everything works out just as I planned it. In fact, that is the goal that many of us usually pray for. "God, give me a safe trip." "Please help me find a parking spot." "Please help my luggage to not get lost." "God, help me to not get stuck in traffic today." All of these prayers are good prayers, and there is nothing wrong with them. And if God answers each of them, we would think that our day was a successful one, and that God truly loves us and has watched over us that day.

But, let's say that each of these prayers went unanswered. Let's say that in one day, I'm involved in a small fender bender on the highway, I have to wait 20 minutes just for a parking spot at the mall, my luggage is lost and it takes two days before the airlines bring it to the house, wet and smelling like jet fuel from sitting out in the rain at the airport, and on the way to an important meeting at church I sit in traffic for 2 hours, not moving at all. A failed day? No necessarily. Let's go to the "greater good" scenario.

God's plan for my life is to prepare me for eternity. He wants me to live with Him forever. (That's His plan for you too, by the way.) And in order to live with Him, you and I must be holy. We must develop patience, longsuffering, kindness, gentleness, and love. Now, all these virtues are nice, and they are easy to have in our lives when everything is going my way. I'm the most patient, loving, kind and gentle person when the traffic is moving well, my luggage is the first off the carousel at the airport, and a parking spot is open at the front row of the store. But, in order to practice and learn these Christian virtues and have them be more than just skin deep in my life, I need the difficulties to develop the fruit of the Spirit in my life. And so God allows difficulties and problems and hardships in my day to help me grow, and when I can look back over my day as I go to bed at night, and see how God has helped me to be patient and gentle and loving in spite of the fact I had a fender bender, lost luggage, hateful salespeople, crazy drivers, no parking, and all the rest, that is a good day, *that* is a successful day!

So, here's how it works. Pray and ask God for those things you want and need, no matter how petty they are.



Bring all your wants, your cares, your problems, to Him. But also ask Him to develop in you the [fruit of the Spirit](#), and always close your prayer with: "*may Thy will be done today.*" Then, when He answers your prayer with the little material and temporal blessings, thank Him! And when He helps you through those difficult times and gives you the power to overcome your impatience and unkindness, thank Him as well! It's a successful day!

And the greater good, the greater blessing, is when we are developing character for eternity, not just having all our little temporary requests answered.

Have a great day! We're praying for you that you will be more like Jesus!

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