

Not Perfection, But Potential
Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church
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When the Lord was on this earth He called twelve to be His followers. These were called “disciples,” a word meaning “learners.” Our word “discipline” as applied to school curriculum (and as it should be applied in spankings also!) has the concept of learning built in to it.

The Lord called these twelve not because He saw in them perfection, but potential. Among them were the volatile James and John, nicknamed “sons of thunder.” Among them was the quick spoken Peter, so often afflicted with “foot in mouth disease.” Among them was the covetous Judas.

Christ chose them not because they had reached the ideal, but because He saw what they might become in Him. Thus the Lord spoke to Gideon when he was threshing grain in a secluded winepress, afraid to be seen by Midianite raiders, as a “mighty man of valor.” I wonder if Gideon looked around to see to whom the Lord was speaking? Here’s the beautiful Gospel truth of that encounter: Gideon might not have been a “mighty man of valor” at that time, but he became one through the Lord’s help!

In a similar way, God has called us to be His followers, His disciples. He has called us, not because he saw in us perfection, but potential. The cruel taunt of his enemies became the medallion of His grace; “This Man receives sinners.” Luke 15:2. How wondrous is God’s grace to receive us even though we are weak and sinful!

Those twelve disciples sat at the table together on a Thursday night, just hours before Jesus’ arrest and crucifixion. He would on that occasion establish what we call “The Lord’s Supper,” or the “Communion Service,” which we celebrate today. The twelve had walked with Him for several years by this time. When they were called they weren’t perfect; neither were they perfect when they sat at the table with Him.

Not long before this they had quarreled among themselves as to “who was the greatest.” Mark 9:33, 34. How Jesus’ heart must have yearned that they would learn the lessons He had for them; that they truly would be “disciples”! And yet,

with the exception of Judas, they did grow into the mold He had offered to them. The Peter who denied his Lord became the preacher of Pentecost. James and John became gentle and loving followers. The Thomas who doubted became a faithful missionary to the ends of the earth.

So when Jesus looks at us today, as we sit at His table, He is looking to see what we may become in Him. If we are conscious of our unworthiness and our need of His grace, we qualify to receive His grace, symbolized by the bread and the juice. It was when this vital sense of need of and appreciation for His grace was lost that Paul wrote the words, “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” I Corinthians 11:27-29. Notice that the “unworthy manner” of eating the Lord’s Supper is defined as doing it without “discerning the Lord’s body.” If it is done without thinking and appreciating, then it is done unworthily.

It is clear by reading the verses that precede this passage, that the believers in Corinth had lost sight of the precious lesson conveyed in the Lord’s supper. They came together as selfish gluttons, not giving due attention to the rich significance of the service. By engaging in the Lord’s supper without giving solemn respect to the meaning, they were pronouncing judgment on themselves. Had they approached the Communion with thoughtful reflection, knowing they were sinners in need of healing grace, these words of warning would not have been spoken to them. Sometimes people read the words of warning and misinterpret them, thinking that the Lord’s supper is only for those who have already achieved God’s ideal in their lives. Not so!

As we saw, Jesus instituted the first Lord’s supper with those in whom He saw, not perfection but potential. The very substance of the ritual is grace being given to those who are in need. I invite you to give thoughtful reflection and solemn contemplation to the meaning of the symbols at the Lord’s table today. We discern in the bread His body broken for us. We see in the juice His blood spilled for our salvation. With solemn joy we accept the inexpressible gift of salvation and thank Him that He sees in us, weak and stumbling disciples, the potential of what we may become in Him.