

Increasing Abilities (3): Reformation & Giving

Sermon October 28, 2018

Today is Reformation Sunday. The Protestant world celebrates God who, 501 years ago, started to renew our faith and our churches through Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox and other reformers.

Renewal has to come from inside. God has to start a work through His Holy Spirit in our hearts in order to help us to be re-formed according to His will.

Please let God touch you today. Let Him come very close to you. Ask the Lord to come inside you and to work in you. The only way you can have a REFORMATION in your life is if you allow God today to transform you by His words and His Holy Spirit.

Let me ask you: What has brought you the most joy this last week? ...

May I ask: What kind of joy are you familiar with?

We should be thankful for all those things God brings into our lives. What you rejoice in will show what you value the most.

God wants to educate us this morning about another very special, extremely important joy, which has to be part of our Christian life. God is here to increase our abilities focusing and learning about a very special thing, which would bring many joy into our daily life and would bring joy into those peoples' lives who live with us or around us.

God wants to educate this morning not only our minds but our hearts.

Aristotle says that "Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."

In order to increase this special ability, we have to use not only our mind, but our heart.

Today, God wants to help you and me to increase our ability to GIVE.

Please don't wince when you hear this word now: GIVE. I do not want to touch your wallet, your money today, but I want you to let God touch your heart.

We have to learn to give OURSELVES.

Giving is the only safe way to make sure you receive. We have to learn and practice to give ourselves in order to make sure that the other person can give us themselves.

We, like most people, can have the tendency to wait for others to fill our needs. Waiting for my partner or my friend to do something for me or to give something to me, then I will do something for them – is a bad habit and can cause a lot of stress, pain and sleepless nights in our relationships. This greedy behaviour can destroy our relationships. If you want to receive, you should give first.

Jesus says: “Give, and it will be given to you.” Luke 6:38

We all should increase our abilities to give ourselves generously and not with grudging heart.

“Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to.” Deuteronomy 15:10.

We, as humans, start relationships because we feel lonely, or because the other person is offering us what we did not receive yet, or what we do not receive anymore. We are longing for love, affection, tenderness, attention, excitement, and energy.

In some stories, we read that the charming prince has found his lovely princess and they lived long and happily even after. We all have a temptation to have this illusion that, if we are in a relationship for years and decades, we don't have to do anything to stay together, we don't have to give more love, more attention, more encouragement and energy to each other, because we gave them enough at the beginning of our relationship.

When you buy a new car, would you say that now you filled it with gas once and your car will run with that one tank of gas for 300,000 km?

Relationships have their challenges. I would not say that, after a while, you would not love less, but differently. Moreover, I would not say that your partner, your friend, will love you less, but maybe his or her attention will be more spread and oriented on children, job, and other activities.

Time to time a very real question hits our heart: does he/she love me anymore? What is going on with him/her that he/she does not spend as much time with me anymore? What is going on in the other person's life? Am I going to be

abandoned? What is wrong with me? Why am I not receiving as much attention as before?

As these questions are raised in our hearts, we panic. In those moments, we used to say that the other person is not the same anymore as years ago. We are ready to point out to them that there is something wrong with them. Then we cry out: poor me.

The worse thing that we do is to force the other person to continue to give ME what he/she gave me before from the beginning. In this situation, we are focusing on what we think we should get and what the other should give us.

Let's take a big turn from us to the other person and now let us focus on the other person: your spouse, your child, your friend, your brother ... think about it right now: when and what did you give of yourself, like your time, your kindness, your smile, your touch to him or her.

Turn away from you and focus on him/her, and don't think that everything you need should be given to you by someone else. Don't wait for the other to give to you what you need.

If you follow this reproach, I can assure you that you will gain a lot from giving of yourself with love, affection, tenderness, attention, excitement, and energy. This will bring a re-formation in your relationship with your spouse, child, friend or siblings. Give them exactly the same things that you are expecting from them. Give them freely, with love and joy, and not with a grudging heart.

Start to give of yourself today, remembering that giving is the only safe way to make sure you receive.

If you will stay stubborn, you can wait for somebody else to give you what you need. Maybe you can wait forever, and you will never get it.

If you are waiting for him to ask you "How was your day?", you should change your approach. Ask him first how he feels, how his day was, if he had any special challenges. Then the other person might be interested in you as well. If you GIVE attention, you will RECEIVE attention in return.

If you want love, please give love. Do you want gentle hugs? Give hugs! You need to be refreshed? Refresh the other person first, and in return, the person will refresh you. You want more respect? Give respect first.

So, in order to get what you want, learn to give it first.

Instead of waiting for your significant other to give you love, why don't you give love to him or her?

Instead of waiting for your children to respect you, why don't you start by respecting them? Be an example.

Instead of dreaming of a wonderful job that satisfies your needs, try to be wonderful at your current job first!

Instead of wanting your friends to invest time and energy in your relationship, why don't you give some extra time and energy to them?

Instead of waiting for peace and calm to come into your life, why don't you create the silence and inner balance needed to feel the peace you long for?

Giving love will bring more love into your life.

You will not only get what you want by giving it, but you will feel happy and independent of others' behaviour.

Make your relationship stronger by giving of yourself today.