

“Containers” Sermon for August 26, 2018

Psalm 84, 1 Kings 8:27-30, 41-43

mid-15c., "one who comprises or encompasses," agent noun from contain. From c. 1500 as "that which contains."

Someone who contains; something that contains.

+++++

NLT (John 6:65)

Then he said, "That is why I said that people can't come to me unless the Father gives them to me."

+++++

The Westminster Confession of Faith adopted by the Divines in Westminster Abbey in 1647, state in the chapter pertaining to saving faith, Chapter XIV:

The grace of faith, whereby the elect are enabled to believe to the saving of their souls, is the work of the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, and is ordinarily wrought by the ministry of the Word

God is the source of salvation, not our experience, good works, our will, intelligence quotient or power of reason. Our salvation was demonstrated by God raising Christ from the dead. It is a gift of God that is

given by God and received or it is not. Either we contain God through the gift of Christ, revealed by the Holy Spirit or Mind of God or we do not. God has willed us to be containers of his very mind, ability and purpose. It is not based anything we are, have, own, experience or possess. We are incapable of having it on our own because we have nothing that will prepare us to contain it. It is ours only with Christ, and without Christ it will never be ours. So even God's king proclaims (1 Kings 8:27):

8:27 "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built!

We are either containers of Christ, or we are not.

There are many different types of containers. The apostle instructs in 2 Timothy 2:20-21—

In a large house there are articles not only of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay; some are for special purposes and some for common use. Those

who cleanse themselves from the latter will be instruments for special purposes, made holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work. So there are different kinds, different qualities, different materials, different shapes, different colors. But the containers only need to remain clean. In the process of spiritual communion with God, we receive what is necessary to serve the special purposes that our gifts and calling command.

Even the “wood and clay” can be refined in the force of God’s love through us in Christ to become gold and silver.

Psalm 84 instructs us that those who would cease to be of common use and fulfill God’s special purposes must discover the beauty of living in God’s containment. The Psalmist praises God saying—

84:4 Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise. Selah. 84:5 Happy are those whose strength is in you, in whose heart are the highways to Zion. 84:10 For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. 12b ...happy is everyone who trusts in you.

What Jesus was sharing with his disciples in the 6th chapter of John was very difficult for them to hear. The scandal of these words from Jesus is so great that at the end of this chapter it seems only the twelve disciples remain with Jesus.

6:66 Because of this many of his disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. 67 So Jesus asked the twelve, 'Do you also wish to go away?' 68 Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We have come to believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.'

... in the Aramaic tradition ... "the eater of flesh" is the title of the devil... The drinking of blood was looked on as a horrendous thing forbidden by God's law... Its transferred, symbolical meaning was that of brutal slaughter (Jer. 46:10)" (Raymond Brown The Gospel According to John Vol 1. pp 284)

The terms "eat my flesh" and "drink my blood" had nothing to do literalism, but with the spiritual

communion that must be ongoing in our lives. What we do in holy communion is a symbol of what must happen daily if our containers are to be used for God's highest purposes, if we are to enjoy the life of glory and power, or witness and love.

Earlier in 6:44 Jesus had said (NLT):

“For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up.”

What kind of container will you be, one drawn by God or one that is common and of little use? The choice determines our future. Amen.