

Expecting and Accepting the Unexpected

Linna Rapkins
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Daniel Newman, an American painter, has said the thing that strikes the artist (at least himself) into a creative response is the impropriety in nature. It isn't the long, smooth line of the beach that interests him, but the break in the line. It's not the great, flat cliffs, but the unexpected cave. Not the soaring mountain slopes, but their sudden craggy breaks. That which cannot be predicted, the abrupt, the sudden, even that which is improper that is what attracts artist.

How like God! Does He reveal Himself to the wealthy, influential nation, or is it the insignificant, scrappy one that receives His revelation? Does He reveal himself to the powerful, talented, or influential man, or is it to the dirty, uneducated, unknown one? Does He care for the ninety-nine sheep or does He neglect them to search for the one missing lamb? Does He favor the faithful son or the one who runs off to the city and spends all his money?

One of the most startling improprieties of Jesus' teaching was the parable of the householder who hired people to harvest his crop.

Knowing the right day for harvest, he goes early in the morning to hire laborers for the day. At such an early hour he finds only a few workers, but they strike a bargain and they set to work.

They are eager and skillful workers. Since there aren't enough to get the job done, he goes out again and again to round up still more workers. His last trip is made in late afternoon and the kind of people he finds by that time are not the ambitious ones. In fact, they may be little more than tramps and they have only one hour to work. When quitting time comes, the householder has them line up with those hired last at the beginning of the line, and as they come by he pays each a denarius. Those who worked all day and did a good job received no more than those who worked for one hour and gave poor service at that. Under the circumstances, they did what any of us would have done. They grumbled to the householder, "These last have worked only one hour and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat." This certainly was a violation of the laws of justice! And yet Jesus says the Kingdom of Heaven is like this. What could he have meant?

I can think of two lessons we might learn from this parable.

The first one concerns how we function at each stage of our growth. There is a book, *Games People Play*, that analyzes different kinds of human interaction. The author explains the "point system: which is in effect, for most, if not all, people. Look at the American greeting ritual, for example.

A: "Good morning." (1 point)

B: "Good morning." (1 point)

A: "How are you?" (1 point)

B: "Fine, thank you. And yourself?" (2 points)

A: "Not bad, thanks. Well, take care." (2 points)

B: "See you." (1 point)

This exchange is classified as an "8 stroke ritual." No real information is exchanged; B doesn't really tell how he is, and even if he did, A probably wouldn't be willing to listen. But at least they're even; they each gave four points and had four points given back. If A and B were in a hurry, they might have to be content with a two stroke exchange: "Hi!" "Hi!" If they were Orientals of the old order, they might have to go through a two hundred stroke ritual. But for these Americans, at this stage of their acquaintance, they figure they owe each other exactly four strokes, not oftener than once a day. If they run into each other again at most they will only go through a two point exchange-"Hi!" "Hi!" If A says, "Hi! How are you?" that's two points, and he expects two points in return. If B gives more than two points, A may become cautious and think he's up to something-selling insurance, perhaps, but if B walks by, giving no response of points, A is insulted.

When we grow in principle, we begin as a child. Taking a child's position, we feel like a child and we're treated like one.

We are pampered, praised, and cajoled. We are showered with love and attention and we accept it. But as we grow, we are treated more similarly and we expect reciprocal relationships-point for point. If I clean your area, some day you should do me a favor.

If I wash dishes for you, then someday you should wash dishes for me. If you are unkind to me, then I can be unkind to you. Our relationships are all worked out and a certain pattern is honored.

We could also see it as a merit-reward system. I do a certain amount and I get a certain reward. I work eight hours' and I get paid for eight hours. So the first lesson of the parable is that we are accustomed to living by a point system, or merit reward system; if it is ignored, we consider it unjust. Therefore, the wage scale of this particular householder is considered unfair.

However, when we reach a perfected heart, or parental heart, this changes. We then give sacrificially without reward. And, according to Jesus, the kingdom of Heaven is like this. From the viewpoint of the Father's heart, the wage scale may not be unjust at all. The merit-reward system which was in effect earlier to keep order among immature people is not necessarily in effect any more.

The second lesson we may learn from the parable is that we don't know exactly what the Kingdom of Heaven will be like.

The ideas we have today may not be accurate at all. Our Leader has told us that there are many things he cannot reveal about the New Age yet, because we cannot take it. We would be too shocked. We often ponder the new age. What will the kingdom of Heaven be like? We think of the nearer future. What will blessed children be like? What will we be like in fifty years? What will our movement be like in ten years? What will our Leader ask of us tomorrow?

The past few years have been excellent training for the years ahead. First we are told to consolidate and everyone gets shuffled around. We build up five big centers where masses of people live together. One year, out we go. Seventy five people go East and start a tour of the country. Fifty or so new centers are started. Ten buses are ordered. In three years' we must get 2,000 people. Do evangelistic tours in America sound crazy to us? Or anti-Communist campaigns on campuses? Or street preaching in New York? Is this madness?

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED; Give up comfortable homes and jobs? Give up respectability and security? Is this any way to build a new world? **EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED!** Even more earthshattering requests may be made of us in the future.

If we obey today the unexpected demands made of us, it will be just a little easier for us to obey the revelations of tomorrow.

We sometimes sing the song:

Have Thine own way, Lord!
Have thine own way!
Thou art the potter;
I am the clay.
Mold me and make me
After Thy will,
while I am waiting,
Yielded and still.

As long as his will doesn't conflict with our own concept, this works smoothly. But what if his way is

completely different from what we have in mind? Miss Kim suggested we look at the past to learn of God's ways. Joshua was told to go in and take Jericho. Jericho was well fortified with a seemingly impenetrable wall. How could his pitiful handful ever take such a city? Yet they did, and by marching around it and blowing a trumpet! When Joshua was fighting the Amalekites, Moses held up His arms; as long as he held them up, they won. He must have looked stupid, but no one laughed or complained. God told Abraham to kill his only son. Moses was told to strike a certain rock in the desert to get water. Jacob stole his birthright with a bowl of soup. Ezekiel was told to eat human wastes. Hosea was told to marry an adulteress, which he did even though it went against his very being.

Miss Kim then asked us, "If you read the stories of the Bible, can you imitate even one event?" Sometimes she said Our Leader would tell her to do something seemingly irrational; if she questioned, he would tell her to just do it. She said his ways and thoughts are higher than hers, so she always obeyed even without the desired explanation. She has reminded us that there are many conditions in our movement today which are far from what our Leader has in mind. Sometimes he makes a command, "Do this. Do that." Then he watches and learns who is really following whole heartedly.

Our Leader is not too interested in spectators. His deepest love and concern go to those who obey-who do what he asks.-those he can absolutely depend upon. This is why he loves the Japanese so much. If he asks for 1, 000, 000 he gets it. If he asks for an anti-Communist campaign, he gets it, even though anti-Communism is at least as unpopular there as it is here.

These then are two lessons that can be learned from the parable of the householder. (1) We judge His system in light of our understanding of justice, which is still on an immature level. The merit reward system, as we know it, may not be in existence in the perfected world. (2) Expect and accept the unexpected in our movement. Laborers in the Father's vineyard must really want to work there, or they may be disappointed in the wage scale!