

Unselfish Interest

By William MacDonald

The most natural thing in the world is to show kindness to those who can repay us, to cultivate the friendship of those who can help us, to be interested in those whom we can somehow use in our projects.

To correct this selfish tendency, Jesus taught, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:12-14 NIV).

While this refers primarily to hospitality, it flows over into other aspects of Christian life and service. For instance, it is easy to devote hours to discipling that intelligent, good-looking young convert and never give a passing thought to that wrinkled, toothless saint in the convalescent hospital. It is a temptation to concentrate on those who are potential assets to us in our empire-building schemes and neglect the spiritual waifs and orphans who seem to be perpetual basket-cases.

Three considerations should bring us up short when we limit our concern to those who can help us or whom we can use. The first is this! It's a good thing that the Lord didn't act like that. He chose us for what He could give us, not for any thought of personal benefit. There was nothing in us to commend us to His love and interest. We would have been shut out if He had treated us as we often treat others.

The second consideration is that the Lord Jesus often comes to us in very unexpected ways. He comes dressed like the least of His brothers. He comes in believers who are outwardly unattractive. He comes sometimes with little promise of the blessing He will be to us if we receive Him.

The third sobering consideration is that when we cultivate friendships on the basis of what they will mean to us, and when those friends reciprocate, we have received our reward, and there won't be any more at the resurrection of the righteous. Jesus reminds us that present repayment cuts us off from future reward.

The moral, then, is that our interests, friendships and kindnesses should be unconditional and impartial.