

Bonhoeffer's Life Together WAF Series

Session 3: The Day with Others

September 16, 2015

III. *Life Together* Chapter 2 – The Day with Others

A. The Elements of Common Life

1. The Psalms

- a. "A psalm that we cannot utter as a prayer, that makes us falter and horrifies us, is a hint to us that here Someone else is praying, not we; that the One who is here protesting his innocence, who is invoking God's judgement, who has come to such infinite depth of suffering is none other than Jesus Christ himself. He it is who is praying here, and not only here but in the whole Psalter." (p. 45)
- b. "The Psalter is the great school of prayer." (p. 47) We learn:
 - i. What prayer means – praying in the name of Christ, according to scripture and its promises.
 - ii. That we should pray [broadly] – "The individual prays in faith the whole prayer of Christ, the prayer of him who was the true Man and who alone possesses the full range of experiences expressed in this prayer." (p. 47) "We can and should pray the psalms of suffering, the psalms of passion, not in order to generate in ourselves what our hearts do not know of their own experience, not to make our own laments, but because all this suffering was real and actual in Jesus Christ..."(p. 48)
 - iii. To pray as a fellowship – "He learns to pray the prayer of the Body of Christ. And this lifts him above his personal concerns and allows him to pray selflessly." (p. 49) "Always there must be a second person, another, a member of the fellowship, the Body of Christ, indeed Jesus Christ, praying with him, in order that the prayer of the individual may be true prayer." (p. 49)

2. Scripture Readings

- a. *Lectio Continua* – Continuous reading through the Bible
- b. A chapter of the Old Testament and at least half a chapter of the New Testament every morning and evening.
- c. "If it is true that it is hard for us, as adult Christians, to comprehend even a chapter of the Old Testament in sequence, then this can only fill us with profound shame; what kind of testimony is that to our knowledge of the Scriptures and all our previous reading of them?...But, of course, we must admit that the Scriptures are still largely unknown to us. Can the realization of our fault, our ignorance of the Word of God, have any other consequence that that we should earnestly and faithfully retrieve what has been neglected?" (pp. 51-52)
- d. "In family devotions it is best that the various family members thereof undertake the consecutive reading in turn." (p. 55)

3. Singing

- a. "Why do Christians sing when they are together? The reason is, quite simply, because in singing together it is possible for them to speak and pray the same Word at the same time; in other words, because they can unite in the Word." (p. 59)
- b. "The purity of unison singing, unaffected by alien motives of musical techniques, the clarity unspoiled by the attempt to give musical art an autonomy of its own apart from the words, the simplicity and frugality, the humaneness and warmth of this way of singing is the essence of all congregational singing." (pp. 59-60)
- c. "A Christian family fellowship will therefore try to master as large as possible a number of hymns that can be sung freely from memory. It will achieve this aim if in every devotion it includes, besides a freely selected hymn, several set stanzas that may be sung between the readings." (p. 61)
- d. "It is not you that sings, it is the Church that is singing, and you as a member of the Church, may share in its song." (p. 61)

4. Common Prayer

- a. "The free prayer at the close of the devotion will be said by the head of the family. But in any case it is best that it be said always by the same person, laying unlooked-for responsibility upon this person....The first condition, which makes it possible for an individual to pray for the group, is the intercession of all the others for him and for his prayer." (p. 63)
- b. Prayer requests from the group given as counsel to the one praying for the group. (pp. 63-64)
- c. "The use of formal prayers can, under certain circumstances, be a help even for a small family group. But often a ritual becomes only an evasion of real prayer." (p. 65)

5. Table Fellowship (three kinds in Scripture: daily, at the Lord's Supper, in the Kingdom of God)

- a. Know Christ as the giver of all gifts, with the Father and the Holy Spirit
- b. All earthly gifts are given to it only for Christ's sake – "Only because the message concerning Jesus Christ must still go forth and find believers, and because our task is not yet perfected, does God in His patience continue to sustain us with His good gifts." (p. 67)
- c. Jesus wills to be present when we pray for that presence. "Every mealtime fills Christians with gratitude for the living present Lord and od, Jesus Christ. Not that they seek any morbid spiritualization of material gifts; on the contrary, Christians in their wholehearted joy in the good gifts of this physical life, acknowledge their Lord as the true giver of all good gifts and beyond this as the true Gift; the true Bread of life itself; and finally, as the One who is calling them to the banquet of the Kingdom of God. SO in a singular way, the daily fellowship binds the Christians to their Lord and one another." (p. 67)
- d. "Through our daily meals He is calling us to rejoice, to keep holiday in the midst of our working day." (p. 68)

6. Work - "God who bids him work and makes that work a means of liberation from himself." (p. 70)

- a. "The work of the world can be done only where a person forgets himself, [and] loses himself in a cause."

B. A Daily Routine

1. Morning Devotions (Prayer, song, scripture readings from OT and NT, free prayers by designated person)

- a. "What do we today, who no longer have any fear or awe of night, know of the great joy that our [forbearers] and the early Christians felt every morning at the return of light? (p. 41)
- b. "The early morning belongs to the Church of the risen Christ." (p. 41) "Morning does not belong to the individual, it belongs to the Church of the triune God, to the Christian family, to the [community]." (pp. 41-42) "At the threshold of the day stands the Lord who made it. All the darkness and distraction of the dreams of night retreat before the clear light of Jesus Christ and his wakening Word. All unrest, all impurity, all care and anxiety flee before him. Therefore, at the beginning of the day let all distraction and empty talk be silenced and let the first thought and the first word belong to him to whom our whole life belongs." (p. 43)
- c. "Common devotions in the morning should include Scripture reading, song, and prayer. Different fellowships will require different forms of worship; this is as it should be. A family with children needs a different devotion from that of a fellowship of ministers, and it is by no means wholesome for one to be like another or for a company of theologians to be content with a family devotion for children. But every common devotion should include the *word of Scripture, the hymns of the Church, and the prayer of the fellowship.*" (p. 44)

2. Breakfast

3. Work

4. Noonday – lunch, rest, and a brief devotion of song and prayer, if possible

5. Work

6. Supper

7. Evening Devotion (Prayer; song; OT and NT readings; free prayers of intercession, forgiveness & protection)