

June 17, 2013

OBSERVATION VS. PARTICIPATION

by Pastor Clarissa Martinelli

A humorous observations from Bill Cosby's book, *Fatherhood*. He writes:

Now that my father is a grandfather, he just can't wait to give money to my kids. But when I was his kid and I asked him for fifty cents, he would tell me the story of his life. How he got up at 5 A.M. when he was seven years old and walked twenty-three miles to milk ninety cows. And the farmer for whom he worked had no bucket, so he had to squirt the milk into his little hand and then walk eight miles to the nearest can. All for 5 cents a month. The result was that I never got my 50 cents.

But now he tells my children every time he comes into the house: "Well, lets see how much money Papa has got for his wonderful kids." And the minute they take money out of his hands I call them over to me and I snatch it away from them. Because that is MY money.

1 John 1:1-7

¹We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— ²this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— ³we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; ⁷but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

There's a difference between observation and participation.

I remember as I was growing up hearing my parents say to me on more than one occasion, "Just wait until you have kids of your own, then you'll understand." I don't suppose that any of your parents ever said anything like that to you? The thing that is so frustrating about that statement is that it turned out to be true. There

is something inexplicable about parenthood, something that can never be understood by hearing about it, reading about it, or thinking about it. It has to be experienced. When Marty impatiently waited for Marissa to come into the world, instantly he knew that his life had changed in a way he could not describe. From that point on he was going to be someone's daddy.

Like parenthood Christianity is something that must be understood primarily by experience. Christianity is more than just a statement of faith, more than church membership. It is not merely a philosophical position. It is a faith experience. You can't buy Christianity, and you don't inherit it from your parents. You're not on the team just because you sit in your easy chair and watch it on television, for that matter you're not a player anymore than the home audience just because you sit in a Church pew. Christianity must be personally experienced!

Christianity is not a sideline experience. Genuine faith in Jesus requires personal involvement.

So exactly what is the nature of this Christian experience, what does it involve?

Three basic answers are found in our text from 1 John today. John, who was one of the original twelve team members shares something about the personal nature of his experience with Jesus which helps us to understand a little bit of what it's all about. The first thing that jumps out at me about John's experience is that it involves a...

Personal Touch

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life.

Second hand experience is not good enough. We cannot count on our heritage, church affiliation, nationality, or even our own good works to replace a personal experience with God. The apostle Paul on more than one occasion wrote about His own impeccable heritage, but he said that he counted all of those things as insignificant compared to his faith experience with Jesus. The righteousness that God requires of us we cannot gain on our own or from our affiliations. We must individually place our trust in what Jesus has done for us. We must meet Him personally.

The experience you have with Jesus is uniquely your own. No two people will have the same experience. Some come to Him with tears, some with laughter, some with great relief, others with solemn awe at the magnificence of it all. But I have never yet met a person who said they didn't feel something when they met Jesus.

The work that Christ did to cleanse us from our sins is a bona fide historical fact. God came to earth in human flesh. They called His Name Jesus. He was nailed to a cross to pay the price for each of our sins, and He rose again to prove His victory over death and to offer us the gift of eternal life. That is fact. John in our text says that he's writing to testify to that fact. Our salvation is based upon our faith in that fact and not upon our feelings.

Now there may be times down the road when you don't feel that way anymore. That's when it is comforting to know that our salvation is not based on how we are feeling at the time.

It is one thing to simply believe the gospel--it is quite another to experience God and to KNOW that He is your savior. This is a knowledge that can sustain you through the times you don't have Holy Spirit goose bumps running up and down your spine. On this Father's Day can you recall the memory of a Personal Touch from Jesus Christ? This memory can be an anchor to hold your faith when the storms of life come raging.

But the Personal Touch or heartfelt experience of salvation isn't the end of the story. A touch from Jesus leads to a...

Personal Transformation

‘If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

Men of God - the Touch of Jesus leads to transformation. If we say we've been touched by Jesus but there's no transformation, John says there's a problem with that. The Scripture says if any one is in Christ, s/he is a new creation. The Apostle Paul wrote about this transformation to the Church at Corinth:

1 Corinthians 6:9-12 *Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? ¹¹And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

Notice he doesn't say that's what some of you ARE but some of you WERE. There's been a transformation. If we say we're on the team but we never put on the uniform, we never make it to the game, then there's a problem.

Right here is where the difference is between watching the game and playing the game, between observation and participation. Christian Fathers, if you claim to be a Christian but your life looks no different than those in the world, then you're fooling yourself. Christ has called you to a life of moral integrity, honesty, sexual purity, kindness and faithfulness. If our lives don't exemplify those things, then our experience doesn't match our professed faith.

Finally our experience with Jesus should involve a...

Personal Testimony

²The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write this to make our joy complete.

John was so excited about his personal experience with Jesus, he wanted to share it with others so they could be touched by Jesus, too. John's experience should be the typical experience of the believer. The touch of Jesus leads to transformation and a desire to share your personal testimony.

When we get a good deal at the store, we want to tell our friends about it. How much more so should our experience with Jesus make us want to spread the good news?

Recruiting is a big part of what it means to be a team player. Christian men of God, are you a recruiter for salvation? Do your family and friends know you are a Son of God by your walk and talk?

Your Christian life should have an even greater motivation to invite others to Jesus.

Sometimes people are afraid to share because they feel like they won't be able to answer every question. That's OK. All the Lord is asking you to do is what John did: say "this is what I've seen and heard. Here's how Jesus touched me, and if

you'll trust in Him, He'll touch you, too." Men, you can't afford to be sitting on the sidelines when you know what the fate of the unsaved will be.

Have you suited up? Are you playing the game or simply sitting back and watching the action?

Jesus wasn't content to let us lose the game, and so he came and made the ultimate sacrifice by dying on the cross for our sins so that we could enjoy the final victory with Him. If, Christian men, you haven't put your trust in Him, believing that his sacrifice saves you from sin, I urge you to do so today and You will feel His personal touch.

If you've had that personal touch from the Lord, does your life show that you're on the Savior's team? Have you experienced a personal transformation, and are you sharing your personal testimony with those who are lost?

Sons' of God – today is your day – lead the way. God make things grow, He also builds people and builds them well. On this Fathers Day I hope your prayer today would be, "Father God, make me a better father; more patient, more Christ-like and more loving."