

2009, 2-15 Burger King Christianity doesn't work (Epiphany 6)

Sometimes when you go to a restaurant things are just not the way you want them. Maybe you have tried to change the food so that it has no sauce, no pickles, or extra cheese please. Maybe I could substitute fries instead of coleslaw. Or maybe I could get the low-fat version, maybe a different kind of bread, or maybe I could have chicken instead of beef. The list of possibilities goes on. But the main thing is that hopefully you can have it your way.

This was Burger King's slogan that they were pushing for a while, but you don't here it as much anymore. When I worked there, I realized that Burger King would make a sandwich just about any way you can think of. Sometimes no meat, or sometimes no bun. Sometimes with specifically one squirt of ketchup or two slices of cheese placed in just the right spot, one under the burger and one on top of it. The customers definitely took advantage of having it their way.

Apparently Naaman wanted his healing from leprosy his way. He wanted Elisha to come and stand over him, call upon the name of the Lord his God, wave his hand over the place and cure the leprosy. Naaman was also upset because he wasn't told to wash in his rivers. What is wrong with Abana and Pharpar. "Why can't I just use mustard and ketchup on my burger. This is not the way I want it Elisha!"

But you know, even though he was a little upset about it, with a little convincing from his servants, Naaman did come through. He did everything just like Elisha said. He washed in the Jordan seven times and instantly, he was healed. God's way turned out to work out quite well.

It is also to Naaman's credit that he sought out God in the first place. He believed that the prophet Elijah was from God and that he would heal him. Naaman sacrificed his time and energy, maybe even his reputation as the leader of a foreign army, because he believed he could be healed God's way.

This is a good lesson to be learned for us who are Christians. We are not going to be able to have God our way. Church hopping for a buffet style of churches leaves you not going to any church at all because you probably will end up not being happy anywhere. God's way is not going to make us happy, make things easy, or make things comfortable.

There were some members of a church I attended that were very active. They had kids involved in programs at church. They gave their time and energy and money to improve the church and grow in the faith. Then as the growing church developed, a new building project was put in place. It just wasn't what they wanted to see with the building and so they were out the door. No hurt feelings, just wasn't quite right for them.

Christian people, often times very faithful people, start to think that they know God's way. But God's way is not what we think. His thoughts are not our thoughts. His ways are not our ways. We must constantly examine ourselves to see whether our plans and our actions are based on what we want, or what God wants. God is certainly not running the show Burger King style.

People have been disagreeing with God's way for a very long time. Moses thought he was not the right man for the job to lead the people out of slavery in Egypt. "I can't speak well. God, I think you are looking for someone else." Like Moses we often

underestimate ourselves. It turned out Moses did quite a bit of speaking in front of the thousands of Israelites.

Determining how we fit in to God's overall plan is a difficult thing to understand. We are uncertain when or how or where God wants to use us. Queen Esther was given an opportunity to plead for her people, the Jews, before the royal King Xerxes. But she thought she would be put to death if she appeared before him because she was not summoned to do so. In her letter to Mordecai she was very clear that the law says she should be put to death if she just pops in before his throne.

Mordecai the trustworthy Jew, tells her that "If you remain silent at this time, relief for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows," he says, "but that you have come to a royal position for such a time as this."

In other words, this was Esther's time. This was her place. And this was how she should fulfill her purpose. It was scary, risky, and just not smart in her eyes, but it was God's way. Like Esther we must realize that God may be calling us for such a time as this.

Esther's experience turned out great when she appeared before the king. Her life was spared and the Jews were as well. Situations in our life may not put our life on the line and they may not seem to have such a powerful significance.

But we face the same situations on a smaller scale today. Sometimes sharing our faith with others can be scary and risky and maybe even awkward. But God likely has placed us for just that opportunity. And who knows, if we are faithful with the small things, God will give us even bigger things to be faithful with.

God's way can't go wrong. Just as God's way can be difficult and nerve racking at times, he also can give us peace and make things easier for us.

Some people really had a hard time with Jesus plan. Jesus began to tell the disciples that he was going to have to die on the cross. "Never Lord, that will never happen to you," Peter said. Peter and the other disciples wanted things their way. They wanted Jesus to be a great leader. They wanted Jesus to rule over the earth and exert his power over the people. They wanted Jesus to overthrow the Romans and take over the world.

Well Jesus did die and the disciples were devastated. But then shortly after his death he appeared before them, "Peace be with you," He said. And now the disciples understood what Jesus was talking about. They understood his plan. They understood what direction Jesus was headed. They now had peace about the whole thing.

In the end, we can see that God does have plans for us like it says in Jeremiah 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."

Now that we have hope because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we can trust fully in God's plan. He gives us at the end of our journey life in heaven forever. Should we really be picky about where God puts us, what he has us doing, and when is the right time?

Another way of saying it is this, "When we receive the Lord's Supper today, does God give us options for any extra toppings? No, it's just bread and wine, Christ's 100 percent body and blood of salvation. Could God have it any other way?"

As Christians we should always be looking out for how God is pointing us his way, no matter if it doesn't make sense, seems to be bad timing, is overly complicated, or if it gives us a headache. God wants us to look to him for grace, do some things to show our trust, and then like Naaman, be healed. Amen