

Waiting

- Students - hard up - summer jobs - one job I never did was waiter!
- Not the greatest of jobs - but not the worst either!
- One thing about waiting - you are meant to pass the food on!
 - when kitchen gives you something, its not meant for you - its meant for whoever ordered it!
 - imagine scene - a new waiter, missing the point, scoffing all the food given to him by the kitchen!
- What's given is to be passed on!

Context

- Second giving of the Law:
 - reminder of what they should already be aware of
 - particularly as they embarked on a new mission - poised ready to enter the Promised Land
- What stands before this passage is the key question - what is it the Lord requires of me? (10:12)
 - "Love the Lord your God" - and cash that out in worship, in walking in his ways, in serving him and in obeying his commands (Deut 10:12, 13)
- That love for God, as Deut 10:15,16 make clear, is to come in response to God's love for us!
 - which love is boundless, matchless, infinite...
 - because of who God is, and because he first loved us, so we are to respond in love!
- Or, if you like, share the wonderful love you've been showered with:
 - be a good waiter, passing on what you've been given
 - its not, after all, given that we might selfishly hog it!
- The general shape is clear - the big picture - love the Lord your God, for he loves you!
- Still needs clarifying - how exactly?
 - we need to look at God - how does he cash out his love for us?
 - how does he show his love, his mercy?
 - in the way he treats people (us)...
- Three things are made clear in this passage, which all end up affecting the way we relate to other people:

1. God Deals Impartially with Everyone

- 10:17: "For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes."
- Throughout Scripture we hear the same note struck - God treats everyone justly:
 - "Is he not the One (19) who shows no partiality to princes and does not favor the rich over the poor, for they are all the work of his hands? (Job 34:19)
- Whether rich or poor, famous or infamous, slave or free, male or female - it doesn't matter. God treats everyone impartially.
 - no favouritism
- Whatever circumstances you find yourself in, God has just as much time, concern, care, justice for you as for anyone else.

Am I... Impartial with Everyone?

- Do we reflect that?
 - very easy in our society to treat people according to outward appearance!
- All heard - perhaps experienced - difference in service when flying whether in a business suit or in civvies!
- Or people who appear a bit odd or different - avoid, laugh at, fear...

Deuteronomy 10:17-11:7 God's love - my love? Fintry, 1/7/2007, am

- Lets strive for that impartiality in our own day-to-day situations:
 - at work - office junior as well as the boss who promotes you?
 - in the shop, the check-out person at the end of their hard day who makes a mistake with your bill as fairly as you'd like to be treated?
- Story is told of a hippy coming into church in the 60's - no idea what was considered OK - wandered right up to the front - sat down under the pulpit, facing the congregation - everyone wondered what to do
 - it is easy to condemn - to usher to one side, show them the door, must be in the wrong place!
 - but one elderly gentleman, not like the hippy in any way, got up and walked down the aisle, slowly got down on the floor, and sat next to him
 - he didn't say "you don't know the system, go away" BUT he did say "I refuse to treat you with any less courtesy than I would anyone else here at church today."

2. God Defends the Weak

- *He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. (10:18)*
- It is possible to be fair in a cold, uncaring kind of way:
 - that doesn't just treat everyone the same, but makes sure they get exactly what they deserve - a detached, clinical kind of scrupulousness
- That's not God's way at all:
 - he realises that the way the world works is biased against certain people - the poor, those lacking friends or family to support in difficult times, those far from home...
 - and so God is especially concerned that they are treated with dignity, with respect
 - if you like, he goes out of his way to be fair to such folk
- The sense is that **God is actively defending their corner**, rather than merely being impartial:
 - he is the person who has gone with the asylum seeker to argue their case at the immigration tribunal, rather than merely an official dispensing the right decision

Am I... a Defender of the Weak?

- Are we characterised by that same spirit?
 - do we go out of our way to defend the cause of the weak?
 - would we stop if we saw someone lying in the gutter - or would we assume they were drunk, had brought it on their own head, and maybe it would be dangerous...?
- Will we stand up for the person being bullied at school, college, in the office (or even in church?) even if the bully is our boss, our own friend, who may well turn on us?
- Or on a broader canvas, will we go out of our way to seek justice for those in the two-thirds world who are stuck in the poverty trap
 - perhaps by sponsoring a child, or by campaigning for worldwide economic reform, or simply putting principle before pocket and convenience and buying Fairly Traded products when possible?

3. God Loves the Unlovely

- *"He... loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. (19) And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt. (10:18-19)*
- For the Israelites a foreigner, one who was not of God's chosen people, was unclean, excluded, unlovely
 - they were only permitted in outer courts of the Temple - literally excluded
- While those purity and separation commands came from God, his attitude did not sink into hatred or despise as the attitude of his people often did.

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- indeed, even more than being impartial, more even than defending the cause of those far from home, **God loves the foreigner**
- the one unlovely to his hosts, God loves
- There is a **warmth in God's heart**:
 - a care, a concern for those who are otherwise shut out, from society, from friendship, from safety
- Its not just a self-justifying kind of attitude:
 - one that says "**this is the right thing to do, so I'll do it - but I don't have to like it!**"
 - no, **God's love towards the unlovely is generous, self-giving, open-handed**
- Indeed its the same love he extends to each one of us, "**who are yet sinners**", in drawing us into his family through faith in Christ

Am I... a Lover of the Unlovely?

- Do I show that same warm-hearted love for the unlovely?
 - **to the odd-ball who is so hard to get away from once you've even said hello?**
 - **to the person who has repeatedly let us down or hurt us or snubbed us?**
 - **to the noisy child, with dirty hands that could have been anywhere, at the end of a long, hard day? - or in the middle of a service?**
 - **to the old grouch next door for whom the world seems to have turned sour?**
 - **to the person who is always demanding of us - of our time, of our company, of our help, of our energy?**

Gavin's Testimony

- During a "**Praise and Prayer**" evening in Davidson's Mains a man called Gavin who at the time was a full-time volunteer with the Bethany Christian Trust came to tell us both something about the work of Bethany, **but also about God's work in his life**
 - up until a few years before Gavin had held down a good, responsible job; he was married, and has a couple of children
 - all looked well
 - but he got involved in the drug scene in Edinburgh - got sucked in - divorce - hostels - streets - drug habit - expensive - stealing - begging...
 - ended up at the bottom, pits
- Finally in hospital - "**God, if you are real, help!**" - he was given a list of hostels - Bethany!
 - did alright for three months - but slipped back - failure, had had his chance, blown it, lower than ever!
 - back in hospital - and a key thing happened...
 - **Bethany would take him back to their detox unit!**
- Shown no partiality by staff - even though he'd failed in past:
 - he got a place and a chance - he was shown mercy
 - his cause was defended, even though he was an outcast, a no-hoper, someone beyond the pale
 - and most of all he was loved - loved for no merit he had in himself, not because of anything he'd done - but just because he was a human being, made in God's image, and loved by God
 - he was cared for, taken an interest in, prayed for, talked to...
- I have no idea who the people were who showed that love to Gavin, that ability to defend the cause of the oppressed, that impartiality and fairness
 - and that's probably the way it should be!
- But their love, reflecting the love of God, was used by God to turn Gavin's life around
 - he became a Christian - came to know the one who is himself the source of love
 - he became a volunteer at the rehab centre, helping others break free from the bondage drug and alcohol addictions impose, showing the same love he was shown to others!

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- As we get to know God we will increasingly want to reflect his character - his impartiality, his concern to defend the helpless, and supremely his love, in our daily lives.
- As we come this week to "live our Christianity in public" through the Summer Focus week, lets seek with his help to:
 - show no partiality, just as Jesus did when he took on frail human flesh
 - defend the weak, as Jesus did when we had no other defence
 - and love the unlovely, just as Jesus did who loved us enough to die for us and in our place