

SALUTATIONS

Over the course of our lifetime, we often remember certain things people say or do, or certain events that seem to lodge indelibly in our minds. We don't know why they stay so vivid, but they do. All of a sudden a light bulb comes on, and we are brought up short as they say, and realize there is a pattern. Once the pattern becomes definable, somehow we sense we must deal with it, else it will not leave. Worse, ignored it will progressively destroy.

The pattern to which I refer is the way people address one another. As one of my protégées used to say, "People do things for different reasons." So in the Fourth Watch this AM, I began to analyze why some people begin their conversations with several of many expressions. The patterns are usually adjusted to the one being addressed.

In following this line of reasoning, I began to delve into why certain people address me as they do. As this progressed, the pattern became stronger, and I realized in many cases, the nature of other's greeting me was usually the same. In other words, "X" nearly always greeted me with humor; "Y" most always with an air of arrogance, superiority, "Y-2" additionally with a subtle sneer. "Z" usually greeted me apologetically; "W" with accusations of multiple shades, cloaked as if it were humor. "S" usually wanted to know what I knew, and was I doing what he expected me to be doing. From "V" I was always in the wrong.

There are so many who address others with utter dejection, false humility, or worse yet, with condescension and contempt. How pleasant it is to be greeted with a simple, "How are things going with you?"

Through the years there are often 'tipping points' with people that come in and out of our lives, with varying degrees of intensity. All of us have come to such places where condescension, or any other aberrant greeting, reaches such a point the association just isn't worth continuing. With others it might be over-saturation of complaining; with some a grating salutation that just gets old.

Getting to the point, my 102-year old mother has been living with us for 17 years now in her own separate house some 75 yards away. Of late she has taken a turn for the worse, virtually, at times, on the threshold of death. In this period her demeanor towards me and my wife has become singular. That demeanor has expressed itself in several ways, all conveying the same pattern, which is an accusation of some sort.

"Why didn't you wake me up?"

"Where have you been?"

"You don't care about me any more."

"You just want to get rid of me."

"Why did you forget to give me my medicine?"

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"Why, why, why?"

She is alert, witty, walks without a cane, and plays cards, dominoes, Scrabble and works crossword puzzles. She has had full freedom to do whatever she wants without any responsibility for the last 42 years, 17 of which have been with us. No, excusing her by virtue of age is a dog that won't hunt. Something else is in the mix.

I have learned the hard way that whatever someone is doing to me is quite often the way I am behaving towards someone else. More importantly, if how others treat me angers me, it often is the way I am treating my Heavenly Father. It seems that He fulfills His word by treating us the way we treat others, and we reap what we sow, so to speak.

There are two dynamics in play here; one is why others address me as they do, and my own fault at addressing my Father. The latter takes precedence over the former. As it turned out, I realized I had addressed Him many times over with an accusation. "Why" is nothing less than an accusation. It is an affront to His character, motives and wisdom. An accusation is rooted in fear; usually fear of something from our past, to being insecure as a child. In my mother's case, her father died when she was young; up until then she was coddled; ergo, fear and insecurity. Other aberrant greetings have their own root.

I have not been privy to the eternal wisdom far in advance of my existence. Hindsight in the best of times gives us a smattering of that wisdom. After 60 years I am grateful my right eye was knocked out by a baseball bat. Why? – it saved me from getting killed or worse, in Vietnam.

I am grateful He has withheld the success of the work of my hands. There are geologic exploration ideas that have either succeeded, later aborted, or they never saw the light of day. Why? –because if He had granted me the success of the work of my hands, my seed would never have witnessed my behavior in the midst of utter failure.

I am grateful my mother is still alive. Why? – to keep me from stepping out ahead of God's timing.

I am grateful she accuses me night and day, because she exposed the accusatory spirit within me towards my Father. Nonetheless, I wish she could, or would, accept the deliverance freely offered her. This seems to be a negative position espoused by many of God's kids. (It is not available to others, unless they accept His primary provision of deliverance from death's curse.) Many of His kids simply either are not aware, or do not believe they can be delivered of fear, insecurity, or whatever stultifies them and/or causes schisms with others. Sadly, most live with their stronghold until the day they die.

"In the problems to which the Almighty sets his humble servants, things hardly ever happen the same way twice over, or if they seem to do so, there is some variant which stultifies undue generalization. *The human mind, except when guided by extraordinary genius, cannot surmount the established conclusions amid which it has been reared.*"¹

I would substitute for 'extraordinary genius' the words, 'spiritual deliverance.'

In my mother's case, what is coming to the surface has always been there. It is like the current weeds that are all of a sudden germinating. Weeds that have never been on this ranch in thirty years have begun to appear in ever-increasing rapidity over the last five years, especially this year. As my wife said this A.M., the seeds have always been there. What triggered them? Imminent death triggered the outbreak and manifestation of the seeds of fear and insecurity in my mother. Possibly, that is why her Father has not let her die. Will she be delivered before it is too late? I do not know. I do know the odds diminish as one gets older; deliverance past 40 is rare, indeed.

In Job's case, he had no knowledge of the conversation between The Most High and the Accuser. (I trust the title "Accuser" is not lost on the reader.) After the fact, it is obvious that the Most High had an eternal purpose that has benefitted millions since his experience.

The Most High was right, is right, and will always be right in all He does and oversees. The first and essential attitude is that we somehow find the inner strength to admit *we* are wrong. The other attitude is realizing He has already spoken in what He had written centuries ago. In fact, the Word *IS* Him talking, if we would only get into it. If those two elements are missing, stick a fork in us; we're done.

Most significant is the response of the Most High in Job chapter 40, verse 2. "Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty to instruct Him? He that would reprove God, let him answer." All this so much to say, we ain't got much if anything, to say.

It is no coincidence that we are to "enter His gates with thanksgiving in our hearts and into His courts with praise." *That* is the proper greeting; *that* is how we should address Him. *Then* we might consider a petition.

How *do* we address one another, especially our friends? How *do* we address our elders, more so our King?

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¹ Winston Churchill, The Gathering Storm