

## **Do you believe?**

rephrased by Bob Rhodes

A contemporary interpretation  
of John Wesley's "Catholic Spirit"  
Sermon 39

### ***2 Kings 10:15***

*When he left there, he met Jehonadab son of Rechab coming to meet him; he greeted him, and said to him, "Is your heart as true to mine as mine is to yours?" Jehonadab answered, "It is." Jehu said, "If it is, give me your hand." So he gave him his hand. Jehu took him up with him into the chariot.*

1. What does he mean, "Is your heart as true to mine as mine is to yours?"
2. "If your heart is true to mine as mine is to yours," then love the world with all that you are, even the people you don't like; even the people you hate; even the people you don't know.
3. And talking about this, maybe we'll learn: what does it mean to be a person of faith?

We as persons of faith – even as Christians – are familiar with the idea of loving one another. We have heard the instruction to love our neighbor even as we love ourselves. We have even read that we must love our enemies, blessing those who curse us, doing good to those who hate us, praying for all persons even if they take advantage of us or if they abuse us.

We remember the New Testament scripture from the thirteenth chapter of John where Jesus gives his disciples a new commandment. He tells them to love each other just as they have been loved; and it is in this way that they will be known to the world. We read in 1 John that love is of God, and that one who does not love cannot possibly know God.

We understand this. We know this. The question is, do we do it? I'm afraid the answer may be no. So what is it that gets in our way? The reality is that no two people see the world in the same way; we don't think exactly the same way; we don't reason exactly the same way. And so we don't act exactly the same way. So, does this mean we can't share some common ideas?

So Jehu asked Jehonadab if they could share some ideas. And the answer was yes. It went like this. First, Jehu asked if Jehonadab's heart was true to his own as his was to Jehonadab's. Then he offered his hand.

So what does the question mean? What does it mean to ask, "Is your heart as true to mine as mine is to yours?" Note that there's nothing here as to either person's opinion.

Everybody has an opinion. Everybody. If it's about politics or taxes or religion or food or the right way to tie a shoe. Everybody has an opinion. It's natural, it's the order of the world. And mostly, everybody is sure that their opinion is right! And for the most part, everybody knows that somewhere – maybe in the deep dark recesses of the unknown – they're wrong about *something* – even if what they could possibly be wrong about is a mystery. And so for the most part we understand why we all perceive and think differently.

But even in faith? Isn't there supposed to be one unalterable Truth-with-a-capital-T? Is there one "correct" way to be a person of faith, to worship? In the scripture passage, there was no explicit mention of faith. He didn't ask, "Where do you go to church?" He didn't ask, "Do you have a choir or a praise band?" He didn't ask, "Do you sit quietly in church, or do you shout out?"

Because we know that there are all kinds of ways to worship. We all think differently, we see the world differently, we see the Divine differently, and we practice our faith differently. It makes sense; we understand this.

So how do we know what's right? The answer is that *we must choose for ourselves*. And more than that, *we cannot* choose for anyone else.

Some would say that we're born into our faith. If I was born into a Methodist family then I'll be a Methodist. While that's true for me, it's certainly not true for either of my sisters – both of whom were born into the same Methodist family I was. If this *were* true, we'd all be Catholic!

And so I suggest that it's not appropriate to impose our worship, or faith, on someone else. When we meet someone – even in a faith environment – we let the little things go. Sure, we can talk about these things, but out of interest rather than judgment. We can simply ask, "Is your heart as true to mine as mine is to yours?" Do you believe? Are you a person of faith?

So what do those questions mean? We are asking if they believe that there's something *more* out there, if there is some higher meaning, some higher power in and even beyond the world. We are asking if they find comfort in what they believe, if they get from their faith what they need. We are asking if they are motivated beyond themselves. We're asking if they treat the world and humanity with the love and respect they wish to be shown; and do they do these things outwardly and visibly. Do they do them tangibly?

"If it is, give me your hand." It doesn't mean to think what I think. It doesn't mean to do what I do. It doesn't mean to believe what I believe. Keep your ideas and your opinions

and your beliefs. And I'll keep mine. Let's not argue. Let's just talk. Let's get to know each other. Let us be in community.

Community? Am I trying to convert subversively into my form of worship? No, I don't mean that. I don't mean, "Worship the way I do," or "I'll worship the way you do." Let's just talk. Let's not argue. Let us be in relationship.

And let us relate beyond the trappings of acquaintance or distant relative. With those people, we often agree in voice simply to be polite. Let us be in *relationship*, to dialogue, to share and even celebrate our differences. Let us be so close that we can be *honest* with one another. And let us do so in a way that is patient and kind, not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. Let us not insist on our own way, or be irritable or resentful. Let us be in *relationship*.

Pray for me – if that's your tradition – and let me do the same for you in my tradition. Ask that I be influenced by the Divine, and I'll ask the same for you. And call me out – as nicely as you can – if you see that I'm doing something for myself rather than for my fellow humanity or for the Ultimate. And join me. Together we can do great things.

And so from this, we may find more clarity. What does it mean to believe? What does it mean to be a person of faith? It is not indifference; it is a celebration of dialogue, and it's a joining together in relationship. It's not vague understanding. Indeed, it is deep conviction with deep openness. It is not either/or. It is both/and. And the one who believes, the one who is of faith, recognizes those who are of faith, perhaps even asking the question: Is your heart true to mine as mine is to yours? And reaches out in dialogue and in relationship.

Think about these things. Ruminates in them. Run the race that is set before you, solid in your faith, open minded to the world and to divine things, grounded in love – so that you might be swallowed up in love forever. Amen.