

March 31, 2008

Another Lesson From Ants: The Scent of Death & Promise of New Beginnings "... look at an ant. Watch it closely; let it teach you a thing or two" (Proverbs 6:6)

"Harvard biologist Edward O. Wilson was fascinated with ant communities. He recognized that ants identified death by smell. When an ant died, its corpse began to decompose and produce oleic acid. Ants recognized that one of their fellows died from the smell of this acid and would dutifully carry the dead ant to the refuse pile. Wilson daubed oleic acid on little pieces of paper that would normally be ignored, but in this case were quickly picked up by ants and deposited in the refuse pile. The final act of his experiment was to put oleic acid on living ants. As expected, the ants in the colony picked up the living ants, legs and antennae protesting, and carried them off to the refuse pile and deposited them there. The tainted ants could not return to the community until they cleaned themselves of the acidic scent.

I find a parallel to sin in our lives. When we give ourselves over more and more to sin, we die a little more. Sin is more than breaking the rules of God (although it is that indeed); it is giving in to death and denial. The reasons for such an excursion into darkness can be complex and related to past hurts and pains, but the effect is the same: we are painted more and more with death.

And as we move and go about our business, we emit the scent of death. Sometimes we are carried off to the refuse pile when discovered. Regardless, the cleansing power is in Jesus Christ, who busts through our denial systems and makes his way into the throne room of our lives, as Nathan the prophet did with David (2 Samuel 12), and brings to our awareness the death scent that covers us.

One of the tragic results of such things is that people, once carried away to the refuse pile, believe that they can never return: they have become garbage. Persuaded they are damaged goods, they surrender more and more to that which is killing them because their guilt is overpowering. But the good news of Easter is that there is a greater power that can forgive and remove the scent and set one free. That power is the inexhaustible love of God in Jesus Christ.

The removal of the scent, however, is not the end of the story. Jesus not only sets us free from sin and death but then empowers us to live new lives (traditionally called repentance). While we never become perfect in this life, we become wiser and grateful. Wiser because we learn more and more about the places that paint us with death and how to avoid them. Grateful because God has forgiven us and we want to live grace-filled, forgiven lives that radiate Life not death. I find it interesting and heart-warming that we tend to want to turn and help others through the kinds of traumas we have experienced once God has delivered us. It is a kind of living gratitude.

Feel painted with death? Don't go it alone. Pastors and fellow believers are willing to come alongside of you and pray for you and be guides toward healing. And remember that God is the God of new beginnings."

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Says the King, to His Kid, today

Prophetic Word: Ringing in my heart and spirit this morning have been the words "reconciliation", "forgiveness", "peacemakers". There is someone in a painful situation of betrayal, unfair, treatment, injustice, gossip ... You are justified to feel disappointed and hurt. But do not let the root of bitterness develop. God's High Calling is into the "Ministry"/Life of Reconciliation, Forgiveness and Peacemaking. Vengeance and Payback belong only to the Lord, Who alone can correct with perfect love and justice. Even in this painful situation, receive grace to practise My Word that you know, believe and confess. "That's what My heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart." Enter into your freedom, peace and joy today through forgiveness, reconciliation and peacemaking, says the Spirit of the Lord.

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