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LOGISTICS

Logistics. The commercials for one delivery company say, “I love logistics.” It is the lifeblood of the Army Quartermaster Corps. In the Navy, on the other hand, a Quartermaster is a navigator (figure that one out), and logistics is the job of the Supply Corps. Whatever you call the people that do it, logistics is an important part of any organization. Napoleon is quoted as saying (in French, of course) that an army marches on its stomach. In the American Civil War, General JEB Stuart’s cavalry was mostly used as messengers and to cut supply lines, until he showed the world what cavalry could effectively do. General Stuart was so effective at interrupting logistics that the war lasted for years longer than it should have.

If logistics is so important to an army or a company, imagine what it means to a nation. One of the most important events in American history was the completion of the transcontinental railroad. Its whole purpose was logistics. President Eisenhower had the Interstate Highway system built for the purpose of national logistics. Moses led over 600,000 men of fighting age—plus women, children, and those too old to fight—out of Egypt. Imagine the logistics.

While every family carried their own possessions, still God had to designate the order of the march and the placement of the camps. (Numbers 2) (See “The Camp of Israel” in *Minutes With Messiah*, March 2007 for a logic problem based on that chapter.) The rabbis say that when Balaam said, “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!” (Num 24:5), he was praising Israel for the placement of their tents so that no opening faced directly into that of another tent, thus ensuring privacy. With close to a million people, that takes some planning.

Then there was the moving of the Tabernacle. Numbers 4 addresses the logistics of just that one task. It was no small undertaking in itself, as certain pieces had to be carried by hand. Surely the bearers of the heavy gold-plated furnishings had to be changed several times a day, if not several times an hour. All of that had to be worked out by an expert in logistics.

But the real problem came in feeding all the people. They were, after all, now nomads with no farming. They took flocks and herds with them from Egypt, but apparently they were specifically designated for the

sacrifices. The people, it seems, were not allowed to use those animals for daily sustenance.

And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month. Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them? (Num 11:20-22)

It appears that Moses is asking the Lord if he is going to have to use some of those animals as food. The question makes sense only if they have all these animals that could be used as food but are not being so used. If all these animals that they were herding around would not suffice the hungry nation, the logistics of feeding them otherwise seemed insurmountable.

But God is a God of logistics. He is the ultimate Quartermaster/Supply Corps. And without all the paperwork, no less. God’s logistics supply every need.

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (Matt 6:26-31)

CONTENTS

Logistics	1
Beatitudes, Part 2	2
A Roller Coaster	4

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BEATITUDES, PART 2

There is a school of thought in business circles that emphasizes “assertiveness” training. The theory seems to be that one must assert his or her own benefits and personality in order to advance in the business world. Apparently the old saying doesn’t apply, “be careful who you step on on the way up, because you will meet them again on the way down.” The theory is that if you assert yourself enough you won’t be on the way down. The beatitudes (Matthew 5), on the other hand, emphasize putting others first. If one wants to succeed in God’s business, self-assertion is not the best policy. Having previously looked at the first three (Minutes With Messiah, October 2013) we will now discuss some of the others in more detail.

Craving Righteousness

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” (Matt 5:6)

On the face of it, this appears to be saying one must advance himself. After all, doesn’t one want to be filled? Doesn’t one want to be righteous? If one thinks in worldly terms, this may be true.

Jesus, though, speaks of the spiritual. In that world there are two conditions: righteousness and

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unrighteousness. Unrighteousness is the state of those whose sins have separated them from God.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (Rom 3:10-12, quoting Ps 14)

Righteousness, the state of being right with God, should, theoretically, be attainable in one of two ways: working off the penalty for sin, or having someone else pay the penalty. The former is impossible, because we continue to sin. One sin separates a person from God, but continuing to sin

makes it impossible to return. Therefore, only the sacrifice of the sinless Messiah can pay the penalty for sin.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Heb 9:27-28)

This being the case, how does one hunger and thirst for righteousness? And how is this a benefit to others rather than oneself?

Those who heard Jesus preach, living as they did under the Law of Moses, would not have understood him to be speaking of craving the righteousness that he would bring with his death. Rather, they would have understood seeking to do good in the same way they sought food.

There is hunger in the world. Many in the United States have never experienced it. Those who work with those that have know the eagerness with which the homeless and hungry seek food. Jesus is saying that this is the eagerness with which we must seek righteousness. But how would the Jewish people to whom Jesus was speaking have understood this?

In Hebrew, the word for righteousness is *tzedakah*, which is also sometimes translated charity. It is more than mere almsgiving, however. It is seeing the giving to the poor as an act of justice. A Jewish person gives to the poor because it satisfies the idea of rightness or righteousness. To hunger and thirst after righteousness, then would be to seek out opportunities to help the poor, because in doing so one is bringing a justness back into the world. We should be hungrily/thirstily looking for opportunities to do *tzedakah*, not merely taking the opportunities when they arise.

Do you give to the beggar on the street corner as you pass? That is good. But that is not hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Do you look for beggars so you can help them? That is more like what Jesus is talking about here. If you seek out opportunities to do good to others, you will yourself be filled with righteousness.

Merciful

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” (Matt 5:7)

It seems almost contradictory to say that if you want something you have to give it away. Nevertheless, that is the case with mercy. If you want mercy, be merciful. That is not to say that we should necessarily be merciful for purely selfish reasons; however, the motivation is of less concern than the act itself.

Paul stated that principle to the Philippians. Good done for the wrong reason is still good.

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. (Php 1:15-18)

If one is merciful out of pure self-interest, mercy is still extended, both to the recipient and the giver. Of course, giving mercy without expecting any in return would be the ideal.

If one is merciful to others, from whom will his mercy come? Perhaps from several sources. If a person is merciful to me, I am more likely to return that mercy if the opportunity arises. If another person observes me being merciful, they are more likely to extend mercy to me than if they had seen me being unmerciful. Most certainly, God extends mercy to those who are merciful. This is stated throughout scripture.

One of the reasons for sabbath observance was to legislate mercy as a result of God's mercy. Servants were to rest because Israel had been freed from servitude.

But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day. (Deut 5:14-15)

Jesus taught a parable to show that God will be merciful to those who are merciful, and merciless to the unmerciful. Recorded in Matthew 18:23-35, he told of a king who forgave one of his subjects a huge debt. When that subject went out and beat another over a trifling sum, the king called him back in and rescinded his forgiveness. "Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?" (Matt 18:33) This says that we should be merciful, not that we might receive mercy but because we have already received it.

Pure in Heart

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." (Matt 5:8)

First of all, what is purity of heart? In some cases, *catharsis* (the Greek word translated pure) referred to a vine that had been pruned and was ready for bearing fruit. A wild vine, or an untended rose bush, tends to bear less

than a plant that has been properly pruned. This is because there is less of the plant vying for the nutrients required to bear. When pruned and properly fertilized, a vine will grow large, tasty clusters of grapes; a rose bush will yield larger flowers.

In the same way, God wants us to bear fruit, so he prunes us. Those whose hearts are prepared to receive sufficient of the proper nutrition will yield the necessary fruit. Sometimes this pruning means cutting off the dead growth. That which does not yield must not be allowed to take away from that which can. God puts restrictions on what we can expose ourselves to, sometimes, because those things merely feed the dead man of sin. At other times, he limits our exposure to certain nutrients because they are actually harmful. We know this in the physical sense; certain fats and processed sugars actually cause

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harmful growth. Certain things we take into our bodies may actually cause cancers and other diseases.

God prunes us and provides us with good nutrients. Philippians 4:8 is the Miracle-Gro® of the spirit.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

A plant, however, does not yield fruit for itself. If we can expect to see God, our fruit must be seen by and in others. This may include, but not necessarily be limited to, the fruit of the Spirit. (Gal 5:22-23) This may include, but is certainly not limited to, bringing others to the knowledge of the Messiah. This may also include bearing the fruit of giving to others, being forgiving to others, loving and helping. Being pure in heart, then, is being ready to do whatever God asks in whatever circumstance.

He who is pure in heart will see God. They will see God for eternity, but perhaps it is more than that. The pure in heart will be able to see God in others. By seeing others as created in God's image, we will be even more willing to bear the fruit that comes from being pure in heart.

There are more beatitudes. Lord willing, we will finish this series in the next issue.

A ROLLER COASTER

Emotions. We all have them. They can cause us to do all sorts of crazy things. Especially around this time of year many benevolent organizations play on our emotions, showing pictures of hungry children or homeless people, hoping that will prompt us to give to their adoption agency or shelter. Nor is it limited to the winter holidays. Almost every advertisement is designed to touch some emotion: a desire to belong, to be liked, to have fun. When was the last time you saw a car commercial showing how slow it could go? How many beer commercials show people lying in the gutters or crashing their vehicles instead of partying? On the other hand, the anti-drug commercials play to those negative consequences.

The makers of commercials play on your emotions, but there is one emotion that they hope you don't experience until it is too late: buyer's remorse. That is the feeling, usually after making a large purchase or committing to a significant undertaking (like marriage), when you wonder if you did the right thing. Buyer's remorse kicks in when the high that the commercials want you to see has faded. But even buyer's remorse will go away, often in less than a week. Emotions are like a roller coaster; they are constantly rising or falling.

The Israelites are an example of the instability of emotions. When Moses first went down to Egypt and confronted the Pharaoh it resulted in the taskmasters increasing the workload. The Israelites hit a low point, complaining against Moses. A couple of years later, after seeing (and being partially spared from) the plagues, those same Israelites were ready to follow Moses eagerly into the unknown. A week or so later, they want to throw Moses to the Egyptians for leading them to certain

destruction at the Red Sea. But the next day they are singing a new song, literally. Over the next fifty days they complain, until they get to Sinai and hear God. Then they are promising to obey and hear. Forty days later they have given Moses up for dead and convinced Aaron to build a golden calf. After a year at Sinai they are ready to move on, but within days they are complaining about the lack of food. It is no wonder Moses was ready to quit.

We like to blame Israel, but forget that we are just like them. The emotional peak of a Christian's life is when he/she is immersed for forgiveness of sins. In the book of Acts, and ever since, the people came out of the water rejoicing. Of those thousands on and after Pentecost, how many stayed on that emotional high when the persecution at the hands of the Jews arose? Experience would say that a number of them renounced Christ rather than suffering pain. Even those that continue to follow the Messiah never reach that plateau again. And yet we seek it.

Perhaps that is why youth rallies and gospel meetings are so popular. They provide an emotional rush. In the average congregation some can be seen distracted by other things during the prayers and singing. But when it is time for summer camp, a youth rally, or a gospel meeting, respondents seem to come out of the woodwork. The interesting thing is that many of those people are the same ones who made a similar response at the previous event, but were bored with the weekly assembly. Events like these are good if even one person is saved. The problem is that most of them play primarily on the emotions of the participants. And what they get are imitators of the Israelites, going from high to low within a matter of days.

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