

Some beaches in South Africa are for whites only. This week the Blacks assembled for a peaceful stroll on the beach. They did so to protest elections in which they cannot vote. Police arrived with dogs and drove them away. Bishop Desmond Tutu said he wanted the world to know that in South Africa dogs are allowed on beaches where human beings are not.

The Whites of South Africa might argue, "We're trying to preserve the family," but in doing so, they create a gross injustice.

This conflict occurs at every level, the conflict between the value of family and the value of justice--or the value of friends and the value of justice. Sometimes we sell out ~~what we believe in~~ ^{justice} because we're smothered by family and friends.

Jesus tells his disciples, "Do you want to follow me? You must be ready to give up your family or friends. Do you want to follow me? You must be ready to give up your possessions."

Now, why does he say this? Partly to help us understand love--how deep is the love Jesus demands of us. For most people, we learn what love is through our family, through a spouse, or through some very close friend. Jesus says that to be a disciple love of him must surpass even that kind of love.

Then he gives these examples of building the tower and going to war. If you want to build a tower you start with plans and materials. If you want to go to war you make sure you have enough soldiers. If you want to bake a cake you make sure you have all the ingredients first. If you wish to be a disciple, the ingredient you need is love.

Some might object that love of family should be first and perhaps Jesus made some mistake here. But there are many times love of family is second. Sometimes work takes you away from family. Sometimes your children take you away from your parents. And sometimes your faith leads you to a place your family has not come. It's not unusual for the family to be second.

But sometimes, it's true, the family becomes second in some perverse way. Things we do or things we own put the family off. And we have to beware because ~~advertisements for things we~~ urge us to do this. Let me give you a few ads to show how this works: "You can depend on Thriftway." The implication is, "Having trouble finding someone to rely on? Our store will help." Another is "Kenmore--trusted by millions for over 60 years." The implication is, "Has someone betrayed you? Our product will help." Or take Revco, their motto is, "A friend for life."

You see the point. Marketing knows the value of love, and if we're not getting it someplace, they'll offer it someplace else.

My point is people are ready to sacrifice family and friends if the right offer comes along, and Jesus is aware of that. He wants to be the right offer. So if we disagree with family or friends, if trust is broken, or love is lost, we turn to Christ, not to another product, not to some injustice.

~~We don't let dogs walk where human beings cannot, but we do let Christ walk first.~~

Human beings may walk at head where dogs walk, + at head where Christ walks.