

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Review Republican
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THE MASTER AND AN HONEST MAN

Many stories are told of Paul Gerhardt whose hymns are still sung in Germany. John Wesley translated some of them into English.

Gerhardt's family was very poor. He was the shepherd boy who cared for the small flock of sheep and goats on the edge of the forest. One day a hunter came out from among the trees and asked the lad how far it was to the nearest village.

"Six miles, sire," he replied, "but the road is only a sheep track and can easily be missed."

"I have lost my way, and I am very tired," returned the hunter. "Leave your sheep and show me the way. I will pay you well."

"No sire," said Gerhardt. "I cannot do that for they would stray into the forest and be stolen or eaten by the wolves."

"Never mind; your master would never miss one or two and I would pay you more than the price of one or two sheep.

"But sire, my master trusts me with these sheep, and I have promised not to leave them."

"Well," said the hunter, "let me take care of the sheep while you fetch me food from the village and a guide."

"The sheep do not know your voice and would not obey you, sir."

"Can you not trust me? Do I not look like an honest man?" asked the hunter with a frown.

"Sir," said the boy slowly, "You tried to make me false to my trust, and break my word to my master. How do I know that you will keep your word to me?"

The hunter could not help laughing.

"I see you are an honest lad, and I will not forget you," said the hunter. "Which is the path? I must find my way for myself."

But Gerhardt would not let the man depart hungry, so he gave him the humble contents of his scribe. Just at that moment several men came hurrying through the forest uttering shouts of delight as they caught sight of the two of

them. Gerhardt had been talking to the Grand Duke, and these were his attendants who had been much alarmed at his disappearance.

This was the beginning of Gerhardt's future career of honor and success. Pleased with the lad's honesty, the Duke had him well educated and thus gave him a good state in life.

Yes, God wants us to be honest in his sight, and to our fellowman. You will find throughout your life that it pays to be honest.

Luke 8:11-18 (NASB)

11 "Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. 12 "And those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they may not believe and be saved. 13 "And those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. 14 "And the seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of his life, and bring no fruit to maturity. 15 "And the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. 16 "No one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under the bed; but he puts it on the lampstand, in order that those who come in may see the light. 17 "For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nor anything secret that shall not be known and come to light. 18 "Therefore take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him shall more be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him."

You might remember Paul Gerhardt for the hymn "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" which he wrote in the 12th century. I love this story of him in his youth. His parents may have been poor financially, but they sure were not poor spiritually. His roots shine through as he considers his responsibility to his master and to this stranger he stands before. He represents Christ well in this exchange and it would change his life.

How are you doing in representing Christ to others? Are you known as an honest man who is faithful to his word and to others? Can people trust you to do the right thing when something else is suggested?

In Jesus story of the seed being planted describes the different kinds of soil it falls on. This soil represents the lives of people and how they respond to the

teachings of Christ. Some are distracted by the devil, some accept it and then drift away, some hear and let the things of this life turn them away. But there are those who hear the word and plant in deep in their hearts. It influences their decisions in life and helps them stay on the right path that leads to eternal life in the coming kingdom of God.

So What Shall We Do? Verse 15 sums it up pretty well: “And the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.” When we hear the word of God we need to listen with a good and honest heart and apply it to our lives. I encourage you to search the word of God and let it lead you to the path that leads to eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

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