

[Day #19] Part 4: No Graven Image – Which Image Will We Embrace?

Read: John 20:19-21

Yesterday, we read the story of Elisabeth and her future husband Jim Elliot and how they despaired that their first year of missionary service had been a complete waste. In the novel version of her story, entitled, *No Graven Image*, Elisabeth refers to her disillusionment at that time as evidence of a faulty view of God, a “graven image,” and it stung!

Ten years later, in 1975, Elisabeth’s actual autobiography was published. The title, *These Strange Ashes*, was lifted from a poem of the same name by Amy Carmichael, a missionary to India whose writings Elliot thoroughly mastered.

The first two lines of Carmichael’s poem are:

*But these strange ashes, Lord, this nothingness,
This baffling sense of loss?*

Through her own experience with “baffling losses,” Elisabeth arrives at some profound conclusions, among which are these two:

Conclusion #1: “Faith’s most severe tests come not when we see nothing, but when we see a stunning array of *evidence that seems to prove our faith vain.*”

We pray, “Lord, we could use a little help here.” The heavens like brass.

“Lord, won’t you please ...

...heal?” No healing comes.
...bring my spouse back to me?” Divorce papers arrive.
...restore my relationship?” The wounded-ness deepens
...give us a child?” Another month of *No*.

Conclusion #2: “It is in our acceptance of what is given that God gives *Himself.*” This truth, fully embraced today, will bring richness and stability to our lives, especially during times of disillusionment. It is in our times of acceptance of what is given – in the disappointment when we realize we still do not know Him as we ought – that God gives us *Himself*.

The crucifixion represented for the disciples a time when God “zigged” when they expected Him to “zag.” Disillusioned and hurting, they cloistered themselves behind bolted doors. Heads in hands, they must have wondered, “What was all that about? So much for Jesus restoring Israel!” They had been wrong and it was crushing.

Suddenly, “Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ ... The disciples were overjoyed! Again Jesus said, ‘Peace be with you!’” (John 20:19-21)

“It is in our acceptance of what is given that God gives *Himself.*” Shouldn’t this be enough?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What “stunning array of evidence” (“Conclusion 1”) have you experienced in your life as a believer that unbelievers might point to saying it proves your faith vain, worthless, or useless?

Describe similar examples of this in Scripture. (Examples might be the disciples on the first two days after the crucifixion, or Job’s wife, or many other stories where the individual was never proven right.)

Elliot’s Conclusion 2 says, “It is in our times of acceptance of what is given that God gives Himself.” What does this mean? How is this acceptance different from sighing resignation?