

“Therefore...be perfect as Abba God in heaven is perfect.”

Ahhh...perfection...I'd like to have a talk with whomever invented that word!

I'd like to know what she or he was thinking?

Where in the world...how in the world...

did perfection ever get to be such a good thing?

**Now granted...there are times you do want things to go perfectly,
exactly as it ought to go, such as:**

-when you are rewiring a lighting fixture...you want those wires to be connected perfectly!

-or if you are skydiving...you do want your parachute to open perfectly...

but for much of life, perfection is more of a burden than a gift

so much more of a limiting figment of our imagination than a

noble ideal that we live towards ...

Once again, how did it get to be this way?

**Perhaps it was because we have the Genesis story of the Garden of Eve...when Adam and
Eve walked with God in the cool of the evening and everything seemed 'perfect'...**

**no job searches, no hooligan children...no tea stains on white table cloths...no bad hair
days....**

**or perhaps it was Aristotle or Plato...one of those Greek Philosophers who imagined some
'perfect' ideal 'out there' that we lowly mortals ought to strive for,**

but in reality could never achieve...

**or perhaps it was our mothers, and I can say this because I am a mother, who insisted that
we look perfect in our Sunday best: no stray dog hairs on our sweater, no wrinkles in our
skirts and no hair out of place....**

Who ever came up with the idea that perfection was, well, perfectly right and good... ought to be sentenced to spending some time in the real world.

“Perfect”, at least as it is generally understood is a bad word, and worse theology. Striving for perfection, believing that we could be “without blemish” consistently... always good and right, according someone’s definition, often our own, is really more of an ego trip, some deep need to be better than the other... to feel superior to the others... and that was never Jesus’ teaching!

So...what exactly is Jesus asking from us?

Consider this possibility...

The word that we translate as “perfect” with all of that above baggage is ‘teleios’ It actually means complete, undivided, whole...

In our reading today, Jesus speaks much more of God’s blessing and love for all of creation:

**God’s rain falls upon the just and the unjust,
the sun shines on the good and bad alike.
God’s presence and action is whole, undivided....**

**What Jesus is asking us to do when he says that we should be perfect as our Abba God is perfect: is that our love, our kindness, our generosity, our forgiveness is meant for ALL of creation,
not just the folks we like or the ones who are nice to us...**

Perfection is not that we must be without blemish all the time...that is perfectionism.

**And as a rule of thumb, any 'ism': be it racism, or legalism or perfectionism
is unhealthy and harmful....**

**To be perfect, in the teachings of Jesus,
is to open our hearts, our lives to all beings
so that our kindness, compassion, generosity, forgiveness and mercy
is available beyond our small tribe or our own club be it family, nation or religion.**

To only be nice to those who agree with us...well...that truly is no big deal....

**To be perfect is to be broad sweeping in spreading our love....
Like those great big irrigators or sprinklers in the farmer's field:
they spray water over all the growing things in the field: corn and weeds alike...
so too God's grace flows over all of creation...
and we are invited, directed to do this as well.**

**Now, notice we don't have to worry about the results of such gracious loving and acting.
We have no control over how others will use our love or our kindness or our generosity.**

Apparently, neither does God!

**But that doesn't stop God from loving everyone and everything.
And it ought not to stop us either.**

**To be more complete in our loving, to be more universal in our kindness,
to be more broad in our generosity
actually saves us a lot of angst and trouble.**

**We don't have to set ourselves up as judge and jury...
we don't have to determine anyone's worthiness or value...**

**We can do what is our true nature: to love and to love...
and let go of the results...**

**I heard a story once about a wise man trying to rescue a scorpion
from a log in the middle of the river.**

**Every time the wise man tried to pick up the scorpion to put it on the shore where it would
be dry and safe, it would sting the old man...**

A passerby saw what was happening and laughing at the old man, he called out:

“You old fool! Why do you keep letting yourself be stung!”

And the wise man replied:

“Why should this scorpion determine who I am?

It is the scorpion's nature to sting...it is my nature to save...”

It is our divine nature to extend kindness, compassion, generosity and joy...

when we do so, we are ‘perfect’, as our Abba God is perfect.

We are whole and undivided as our Abba God is whole and undivided.

We are whole in our humanity and thus live in our divinity.

We ought not let others deter us from being our true selves.

They have their work to do..

we have ours.

If God allows each part of creation full freedom....

whom are we to narrow another's choices?

**To be perfect does not mean living up to an ideal that is impossible....
but to live according to our true nature.**

Our only work is to be whole and undivided as we possibly can be.

And when we fall short,

which we most certainly will...

being perfect includes acknowledging that we

truly have been created as imperfect beings....

and so we make amends....

we say "I'm sorry"

and we begin again...

and That is being Perfectly imperfect!

And for this "perfect" life we have been given... we can whisper, thank you...Amen!