

Faith Matters # 7 – God’s Baby-talk – April 9

As John Calvin taught us, when God speaks to babies, God babbles. In other words, God communicates with people in ways that they can understand.

That’s true for us, too. We don’t try to teach thermodynamics to kindergarten children. That’s why God did not inspire Moses to teach the Hebrews to love their enemies. Pharaoh would have slaughtered Moses and all the Hebrews too for such nonsense. In those days, people weren’t ready for that level of teaching. They were spiritual babies.

What God **did** inspire Moses to proclaim, among many other teachings, was not to kill someone because he knocked out your tooth or blinded you. Instead: an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth (Exod. 21:23); just that and no more. That was God’s baby talk to an infant nation. But it was still revolutionary at that time. It would take centuries before the world could begin to accept the adult teaching that Jesus gave: that God is love, and that we are to love our enemies and to forgive them. That, too, was – and still is – revolutionary. He not only taught that, but lived it at the Cross.

When we read the Bible, we should not be surprised that in ancient days God often dealt violently with violent people. That was the language they understood.

You often hear people say that the God of the Old Testament is a violent God, and the God of the New Testament is a God of love. No. God does not change. God is always a God of love. The Hebrews repeatedly disobeyed God’s commands; yet God forgave over and over again. The awful suffering they experienced was not God’s punishment. It was the consequence of their way of life. They wandered away, and yet God came searching for them. One of the saddest lines in the Bible as reported in Isaiah is God’s cry: “Why when I called, was there no one to answer?”

It’s not baby-talk but very grown-up talk when we proclaim that God came to rescue us in Jesus Christ who died on a cross and was resurrected from the dead because he loves us.

(by Rev. Willard Pottinger – Erskine Presbyterian Church, Hamilton)