

All is Fair...

Mark 7:24-37; James 2:1-10, 14-17

All is fair in love and war.

We begin with war, of which politics might be considered a subset.

War and the mortal conflict that is the outcome of it, has no real rules, which implies that everything is fair. If you win, the end justifies the means.

We like to think that some conflicts are more civilized than others, and that one side is more “fair” than the other, but atrocities and terrors happen all the time on both sides of a conflict. And in the end, the victors decide what is fair and what is not. History is written by the victors, as they say. For example, the British regulars that came to fight the colonials in American Revolution, didn't think that it was fair for the American militia to fight from behind trees. But we won the war, and have no king, take note.

And then there is politics, a milder form of war. Just turn on the television and watch the claims that the sky is falling and that armageddon is on its way if one's party loses an election, an appointment or whatever. The winners, as was noted, get to say what is fair, apparently. Crying fair or foul depends on who has the upper hand and the votes and the numbers. It is amazing to watch what happens **when one party gets into majority power, and proceeds to change the rules...what is now going to be fair...to them.** The party out of majority power cries foul, and perhaps with some justification.

And that is the whole understanding of fairness. **That is what is fair is usually what is fair to me.** If I don't like it, or it makes me change my status, it isn't fair.

But fairness is not a personal possession. That is what is not fair to the individual may actually be more fair and just to the larger group, and/or a larger purpose. Just because it is not fair to me does not mean it may be unfair to our friends and members of our “group.”

For example, let me introduce most of you to **the advantage rule**, which broadens the concept of fairness. Most of you don't know what that is, because you are not familiar enough with the sport of soccer. The gist of the rule is that if you go down on the ground during the match after twisting your ankle, and your team is about to score, the referee will not stop play for you, no matter how much one part of the gathering spectators may scream. Smart rule, even though your throbbing pain may think it is not fair for you have to lay there with no one able to attend to you. But the larger issue is that your team is about to score, perhaps, a winning goal. It may not be fair to you (or your family in the bleachers), but is fair to the team. **Your sense of fairness becomes subordinate to the higher need, to win the game.**

Our gospel example follows the same basic understanding of fairness. Note that even though Jesus went through the expected response of telling the Syro-Phoenician woman that she was off limits, (and then receiving an admittedly tart response), he healed her anyway. Even though it was culturally fair and expected for the Master to prioritize on the needs of His own people, it was more important to reward the woman's persistent faith, for **the higher fairness is to build on the woman's passion for healing.**

In the Master's eyes, it seems that all is fair in love.

(Although it might want to be noted that sometimes relationships blur the line between war and love, but general idea is there).

For the one who cares does not think in us versus them terms. The one who shows compassion will not engage in binary thinking, where one side is right and one side is wrong. The one who has the ability to lift the quality of life in another will not be concerned with who wins and who loses. The world, in reality is not either good or evil, unless politics and tradition chose to see it that way. For in the end, the world that **God looks down upon has rivers, mountains, beaches and deserts. We make the boundaries and the walls.**

In living out the call of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, all is fair in love.

All is fair in those kinds of words and actions that show care and sacrifice for others...which is always the centerpiece of true loving relationships. Indeed, very often it is precisely those discipleship kinds of actions that don't look very realistic to the culture of the world.

There are those times when disciples act in ways that the world doesn't think is fair or just.

It may seem unfair to be generous to people and causes that go unacknowledged.
It may seem unfair to be forgiving to those who show little regret or remorse if at all.
It may seem unfair to be a peacemaker in the midst who are itching for payback.
It may seem unfair to be a servant when taking charge is what is expected.

But the disciple serves anyway, for life isn't fair, but Jesus always is.

In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

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