Actions without Humility

While our history learning has been that America is the land of the free, of opportunity, and equality, we have lived in a class system of lower, middle and upper. In many ways we have tried to more equalize those classes throughout our history, but there have been periods when the differences have been more glaring than others. With this class distinction the concept of humility does not exist because one continually needs to be focused on one’s own interest for one’s survival. I recently read a book “Touchstone” by Laurie R. King which took place in London from April to August 1926 concerning the possible miners’ strike. The scene is that we are at country home of someone from the upper class. A guess is just arriving while another is passing who is dresses in working clothes. Assuming that this gentleman is of lower class, he completes ignores the man. His friend said to him “You reacted with resentment. It was because his attitude humiliated you, it did violence to your self- respect.”

This gave me an even more expansive view of the violence the world has experience since the beginning of time. Treating another human being as being unworthy is of itself a violent act. Now that individual has violence in his heart and in some way must let it out. Some of the results in our country have been slavery rebellions, civil war, strikes, murder, and mass shooting.

Not having any reason or understanding of being humble gives one license to act without kindness, courtesy, or respect. I would like to share a more recent example of behavior from those with the absence of humility. Several weeks ago Michigan played Michigan State, teams which have a Big Ten as well as a state rivalry. There had been good plays from both teams. Near the game’s end Michigan scored and went into the lead. It appeared that the game was over as there was too little time for Michigan State to score. All that was needed was a punt. But something happened, the punter fumbled, Michigan State recovered and ran the ball in for a touchdown to win the game. Can you imagine how that young man who fumbled the ball felt? He was crushed, he had lost the game for his team. He was embarrassed. He felt guilty. He blamed himself. He wanted to hide, maybe even quit the team, he could not show his face. I am not sure how his team or coach treated him, but I do know what some Michigan fans did. They sent him death threats. Violence! This is just a game. Really we would still consider him a boy. He is learning. He was not prepared for all the possible outcomes of that punt. He is and will continue to make mistakes.

Another example happened at the Alabama/LSU game. On an apartment building was a sign that read “Finish What Katrina Started”. I have seen lots of other behaviors at sporting events that show a lack of humility. Fans will boo or call referees names if they do not like a call. Others have thrown things. Coaches will yell at a player, scream in his face, or take them out for the remainder of the game. Other players will call a player names, they will ignore or glare, or may even do some physical or property harm. After either a big win or a loss, a mob of fans can trash a city street.

It is only with humility that an individual and all the rest of us can rise above one mistake, a rivalry, a difference. With our teammates giving us the understanding that we all make mistakes, our coaches giving us the same message and some help to do better, and the fans saying we want you in there doing your best. Then we do not feel defeated. We have hope, strength, and courage to get back into the game.

Please do not tumble down humility.

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