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The actual task of the Explorer

Or: What we have to do.



SOURCE: MONNERJAHN 2012

If we would like to also use the summer as a time of deepening, so that we can enrich our lives, then we need to pose the question: »What must I do to explore my life?«

In Numbers 13, 17 the story begins to show us the path:

»Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan, and said to them, "Go up there into the Negeb, and go up into the hill country.«

Moses sent them to investigate the new and unknown land of Canaan. In order to do this, they are to climb up into the mountains. That means, the first step consists of attaining an overview of the situation. First, look at the whole picture before you lose yourself in the details. For those who later look at the individual parts after they have been to the mountain of overview, know where to place the pieces and experiences they now see.

Then the story of faith gives the second step in verse 18.

»See what the land is like.«

The task given here is important. »See how the land is!« A sober view of matters is required here, a viewing that remains firmly grounded. This is a matter of humilitas, of humility, in the best and first sense of the word. The root of humilitas is the Latin word »humus« or earth. Those who have humility are those who are grounded, who stand on the earth with both feet, who see reality as it is and not as they wish it to be or imagine it to be.

If we wish to look at the new land of our future, then this humility is irreplaceable, because it combats the tendency toward exaggeration of all kinds. Humility claims neither too much, nor too little. The person who exaggerates the good and the beautiful (I am the smartest, etc.) is not humble. The person who exaggerates the weaknesses (I am just a worm in the garden of God, etc.) is also not humble. For neither the one or the other stand on the ground of reality. If we look upon the new and unknown, then we should avoid every form of exaggeration. Make no better or no worse than it is in reality.

When we look at verse 18 more closely, then the story gives us the next directive for our life.

***»...and whether the people who live in it are strong or weak,
whether they are few or many«***

After the warning about exaggeration, the first thing we should look at are the people. Look at the people who live in the new situation. Are they strong or weak? In other words, what kind of strength are we looking at? And there many of them, or only a few? That means, what size of group are we dealing with?

This is where we clarify the question: With **whom** are we dealing? In a new situation, look at the people you will deal with first. For if all the other conditions are one, but we cannot deal with the people there, then this will be no place where we can live. What is the use of having a dream job position if I cannot live together with my colleagues? What is the use of a dream location if I cannot live with my neighbors?

Then verse 19 leads us to the next step.

***»... and whether the land they live in is good or bad,
and whether the towns that they live in are unwalled or fortified.«***

Only now should we look at the land, at the situation. After the explorers had looked at the people, they should turn their attention to the **situation** which we are considering moving into. Is it good or bad? Does it strengthen or weaken the people living there. Are the cities in camps or are they fortified? Do the people live free, unprotected abandoned? Or do they live enclosed and behind walls? How much security do they need?

Here we face the question: **What** are we dealing with? What is the situation like? What are the conditions which we will face?

Then verse 20 follows with the next step.

***»...and whether the land is rich or poor,
and whether there are trees in it or not.«***

Only now are we to assess the fruitfulness, the productivity of the new situation. This is no simple instruction to be taken lightly, because we modern human beings almost always assess the potential and then ignore all the other steps.

How fruitful is the new situation? The question as to fat or meager is the issue: is there going to be bread and life enough for all? Will there be enough for to live from? The question about the growth of the trees is the issue: Can anything grow here? Can anything be brought to growth here? Here we must soberly examine whether the new situation is one in which we will languish, or whether it is a situation in which fruitfulness and life can be brought forth through labor, investment and effort. While this is an important question, I remind you again, it is not the first question.

And this part of our story ends with the mandate of verse 20.

»Be bold, and bring some of the fruit of the land«

The explorers should gather concrete evidence (fruits) and take them along. There should be clear and tangible proof that life and salvation are possible in the new situation. In other words, be ready to give an account of what you are seen, experienced and are to report on. What are the things on which you base your observations, judgments and opinions?

These, then, are the steps into the new and undiscovered country of our future.

1. Gain an overview of the new situation.
2. Do not exaggerate, but remain grounded.
3. Clarify with whom you will be dealing.
4. Clarify with what you will be dealing.
5. Then examine whether this promises to be fruitful.
6. And be clear on what you concretely base your judgements and opinions.

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