

WEEK 7: Full Life in God's Kingdom: God's Purpose for the Church in the World

Faith formation in a secular World: Brentwood Hills Church of Christ, Fall, 2018

QUITE A JOURNEY!

- We live in a culture that is rapidly unraveling...
- *Immanent Frame* requires more intentionality on our part to live as faithful witnesses to God's redemptive narrative.
- Faith is living out our beliefs in real time – it is the narrative that determines our actions, our thoughts, and our words...
- The Christian master narrative is one of emptying one's self (*kenosis*) of the sake and benefit of others (Philippians 2:5-11).
- We all need regular practices and disciplines to deepen our participation in God's purposes.
- You are uniquely equipped to pursue God's imagine through that with which you are entrusted...
- What, then, is the role of the church (*ekklesia*) to this end?

MISSIONAL METAPHORS (from last week)

Paul to Corinthians (second letter):

- You are the aroma of Christ (2:14-17) – not a “peddler.”
- You are the reflection of the glory of God in Christ (through the Spirit of God dwelling within) as you contemplate the Lord's glory (3:12-18).
- You hold this magnificent treasure (the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ) in fragile jars of clay – to show the all-surpassing power is from God and not us (4:4-7).
- Christ's love compels us – we no longer live for ourselves but for him – as ministers of reconciliation. We are ambassadors of peace. (5:14-21)
- “As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain” (6:1)
- Develop a missional imagination – prepare yourself for the battle (6:3-10)

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR

- Much discussion about the “letter to the Ephesian church...”
- Most likely a general letter to encourage churches. Last week, we considered the importance of the message of Ephesians 2:1-10 – you are the handiwork of God...
- My favorite Bible text – 3:20, 21...
- Leads into magnificent description of the church at work (Ephesians 4:11-16)
- Gifts to the church – leaders – all leaders – for one specific purpose – to equip each member for works of *ministry*.
- *Here it is essential we do not forget Paul's earlier words – “you were handcrafted by God to serve (“good works”).*

INDISPENSABLE EQUIPPING ELEMENTS

- Unity of faith (all of us) – the “same mind” of Philippians 2 – in the knowledge of the Son of God.
- Towards maturity – attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ?
- This is the answer to spiritual immaturity that focuses on the needs of self and is susceptible to deceit and heresy.
- *Aletheuo* (“truthing”) in love – we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of Christ!
- *Every aspect* of our life needs to be a manifestation of God’s love...
- Every part, working as designed, is essential to this...
- As the body grows in love and interdependence, the body grows.
- This is a direct attack on our culture’s “*expressive individualism.*”

EXCURSUS ON LOVE (from Scot McKnight’s *A Fellowship of Differents*, Zondervan: 2014)

- How do you eat salad from an excellent salad bar?
- We are different by design – celebrate it!
- So, what do we do with those who are “really different” – those who are living outside of God’s design for life?
- The Jesus way is to love and accept just as they are (not affirm, but love).
- Chapter 5 “Love is a Series of Prepositions.”
 - This is core – love God, love neighbor as self... “Do everything in love” 1 Cor 16:14
 - “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love” Galatians 5:6
 - Terribly misused work in “American” English – emotional pleasure, experience...
 - Rule one (McKnight) – do not define love by looking up “love” in dictionary.
 - Rule two – Define love by watching God love Israel, his Son, and the church – in fact, the whole of creation...

ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF AUTHENTIC LOVE (from McKnight)

- Element 1: Rugged Commitment
 - It is a covenant, a commitment, not primarily emotion or affection. Commitment does not deny emotions, it reorders emotions.
 - Love is often hard work. In the absence of hard work, love remains superficial and conditional.
- Element 2: Rugged commitment to be “with.”
 - Incarnational! Immanuel “God WITH us.” QUANTITY TIME, get to know...
 - Love cannot be love without presence – commitment to be “with” no matter what
- Element 3: Rugged commitment to be “for.”
 - If God is for us, who can be against us? Deep security in authentic love, unconditional
 - If you know I am relentlessly for you, you care what I think...

- Element 4: Rugged commitment “unto”
 - I want what is best – as God does...

LOVE AS A HERMENEUTIC OF GOD IN AN IMMANENT FRAME

- Disclaimer: This understanding of love needs to be nuanced for situations of abuse and dangerous behavior...
- Tale of three roommates
- How will we be known by those different from ourselves?
- The incredible conversion of Debra Hurst.
- Want to make a difference in today’s world? Love well. Love is challenging, love is demanding – but God *is* love.
- Strong core, soft edges (Barry Corey, *Love Kindness*)
- “As a church, we need to make a stand!”
- YES – for the word that most often describes God in the OT – *hesed*.
- *May we be known as a people of lovingkindness and inexhaustible love.*