

## **The Christian Master Narrative:**

Our Call to Witness the Way, Truth and Life Philippians 2:5-11

Faith formation in a secular world: Living the way of Jesus in a World of Complex Issues Brentwood Hills Church of Christ fall, 2018

## **Review: Paul's "Faith of Leap"**

I have found the SURPASSING value of KNOWING Christ Jesus as Lord

New purpose for living!

I have not yet arrived, I have not yet attained my goal" – what?

"For the reason I was taken hold of my Christ Jesus." Ok, what is this?

"One thing I do – I leave everything behind for this one thing!"

OK PAUL, COME ON. WHAT IS IT THAT YOU ARE STRIVING TO ATTAIN?

"I want to be like Jesus." This is the pattern spoken of in Scripture. Life's *telos*

WARNING: There are enemies of the cross. Who could this be?

Their destiny is their destruction. Note – their *telos* (goal) for life condemns them.

Their god is their stomach (their ultimate value are their fleshly desires)

Their glory is in their shame (height of irony – wanting more we become less)

Their mind is set on earthly things...

## **What is the relationship of my faith to "church?"**

- What comes to mind when you hear the word "church?"
- Unfortunate translation of *ekklesia*. English word is from Middle English *kirke* – from Greek *kyriake oikia* meaning "lord's house."
- Greek word *ekklesia* – *ek* (out) *klesis* (called). Thus, the "called out."
- God's people have been the "called out" since Abram in Genesis 12.
- Why? Called on a journey of FAITH, broken and blessed, for the sake of the nations to the glory of God.
- Most succinct definition of purpose in Ezekiel 36: "The nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes" (23b)
- Our expressed, visible faith is the face of God for the world...

## How First Christians Would Understand *Ekklesia*

- When we say “church” we have different ideas:
  - A place of gathering – a building
  - That organization which provides my spiritual needs
  - A religious institution in which I participate
- Early believer:
  - “Called out” – *ekklesia* referred to a political phenomenon - an all-in participation
  - An assembly of citizens – not used as a religious word (*thiasos* – a cultic assembly of worship). Representatives of a cause (in this case – faith in God’s narrative)
- Early church used the word to describe the special people of God, citizens of God’s kingdom, called out for the sake of God’s purposes in the world...to show the uniqueness of God’s design (holy) for life
- FAITH – the lived out reality of the Kingdom (community) of God!

## The Master Narrative of God’s Reign?

- Every group has a legitimating narrative that sets it apart. What is ours?
- Philippians 2:5-11 as “master narrative.” Negation...
- Consider – “the power of Christ-crucified?”
- “*hyparchōn*” concessive or causative?
- New song (music and lyrics!) for life:
  - Because/although [x] *form of God*
  - *Could* have but DID NOT [y] *use it for self- advantage*
  - Instead [z] *took on form of servant – even death on a cross!*
- This is the very essence of God – the image of God – the Word of God made flesh. THIS IS THE IMAGE FOR WHICH WE ASPIRE!

## What is the Story of the Church?

- *Kenosis* (emptying of self for others’ sake) leads to the transformational union (*hypostasis*) which embodies *theosis* (our being united with God)
- We become what we love and pursue... (this is why idolatry is toxic – we become something much less than what we could be)
- The church “is a gathering place to receive the ministry of Jesus through the embrace of others. Embraced, those ministered to through their death experience are ordained and sent into the world to minister to their neighbors. The church has no life outside the receiving and giving of

ministry. For without [that] dynamic, the church is absent of Jesus Christ.” Andrew Root: *Faith Formation in a Secular Age* (2018) 201.

### **Without What Dynamic Are We Not of Christ?**

- Central message of Christian faith? “If you would follow me...
  - Deny self (*kenosis*)
  - Pick up your cross (willful, intentional engagement in Christ hymn)
  - Follow me (*hypostasis*) - more than occasional “drop in.”
- The dynamic of giving and receiving ministry...how?
- Deeper meaning of baptism and the table – *die to live*. Death precedes life. Authentic life can only come out of a true dying to self...
- Why did God use Ananias to give Paul his sight? God uses us so that we can experience death bringing life. Ananias’ call was for his sake, not Paul’s. God didn’t need Ananias – God blessed Ananias by “calling him.”

### **True Nature/Function of Church as Family and Body of Christ in the World**

- We will look at this carefully in our 7<sup>th</sup> study. Ephesians 4:11-16 presents most complete and dynamic view of the church in Scripture.
- Let’s tie together the concepts of our first 4 weeks of study in the context of the identity of the church.
- The church has been pushed out to the margins by our current culture – the idea of God generally dismissed...
- We are not who we think we are *to the world* – *for them* we are who *they* think we are – we need to “re-brand.”
- We (all humanity) were made in the image of God. Jesus is the image of God in the flesh. *Kenosis* is the frequency of authentic living.
- Not so much to “imitate” Jesus as to *participate* with him in new creation. We are called to be the proleptic, eschatological people of God.

### **Homework**

- An assignment more difficult from some than others.
- NT Wright says the world is changed and challenged by unexpected acts of grace, mercy, and generosity. This is *kenosis* (emptying of self).
- Be very intentional this week of emptying yourself of pride, caution and self-focus – SO THAT you are available to meet the needs of others.
- This will look very different depending on your personal narrative and your daily placement.

- Try the “Jesus formula.” Though you could X, you choose instead to do Y, taking on the form of servant even to the point of sacrifice for the benefit of another.
- Let God do the exalting...