

The Death Of Christian Theology 4-25-10 Crossroads Community Church

John 13:34-35; 1 John 4:7-12

"The Death of Christian Theology" Biblical references adapted from John and I John, concerning loving one another.

Up until the civil war period, and in some cases up to 1900, the study of theology, once called the "Queen of Sciences" was the study of God and how we can relate to Him. Loving God and loving one another was the heart of Christian theology, and it still should be.

Today, under the banner of Christian Theology, we teach what is better described as churchology. The focus is no longer on the unity of faith, but rather the differentiation of church doctrines. Humankind has a strong herd instinct. We want every one to be part of our herd, believing what we believe, focusing on the details of our interpretation, rather than on the unity of the faith and an appreciation and tolerance of those with different details of belief, yet believing in the same God and the same Jesus Christ. In practice, Loving one another as the essence of our faith.

We can not dictate to someone else what to believe, we can only by example show unconditional love and let God lead and reveal the truth through our sharing the whole word of God, not just our favorite passages.

It is amazing that we have not retained this learning. Why do you suppose Jesus said "Judge Not"? Because when we judge others, the very first thing we do is determine how they are different from us. Passing judgment separates, it does not unify.

And this assumes that we have judged correctly, Rarely do we have all the facts, that is the truth, nor can we see into the heart of the person. How can we possibly make good judgments?

John 13:34-35 (NIV) Jesus says:

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Jesus instructs us to love everyone in good faith. Jesus says the Father will do the judging, we can't judge correctly and we should not try. Of course, when we love as instructed, we are going to love people who let us down. We are going to love people who take advantage of us. We are going to love people who will view us as their enemies.

Getting even with them, not our problem. God says this is his domain and we are to stay out of his domain of judgment. Jesus tells Peter when he asks how many times are we to forgive a person, 7 times? No, Jesus says, 70 times 7. Another words, more times than we can keep track of.

Paul teaches us in his letter to the Romans

Romans 12:10 (NIV)

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Loving one another requires us to rein in our desire to be first, to be the most important. We are to honor others ahead of ourselves. We are also to avoid as much as possible giving others cause to be angry with us.

Romans 13:8 (NIV)

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law.

Owing someone gives rise to our fearing or resenting the one to whom we owe, the person owed will become impatient and angry with us if we fail to live up to his expectations of repayment.

Let nothing be an obstacle to the flow of genuine love.

Galatians 5:13 (NIV)

You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.

This is a warning to us that just because we know Christ and claim to follow him, we cannot stand on our righteous high horse and look down, or pass judgment on others.

Ephesians 4:2 (NIV)

Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

We are not given status among men because we believe in Christ, rather because we believe in Christ we are able to freely serve others doing good for them. Yes, that means those who call us friend, and those who call us enemy.

1 Peter 1:22 (NIV)

Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart.

1 Peter 3:8 (NIV)

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

These scripture verse represent the essence of Christian faith. Have you heard any indication from these passages that we are to judge or differentiate between us and our brothers and sisters in the faith. I don't think so!!

Does this mean we have to enjoy other styles of worship, no, but we should appreciate different forms of authentic worship. Whoops! That word "authentic" is a Judgment word of which we must be careful.

Gayle and I were at a very large evening worship service in Miami Florida a couple of years ago.

The service was conducted bi-lingually, but the character of the service was definitely Hispanic. During the singing many people were dancing in the aisles. Really it was more like jumping up and down rhythmically. At first we thought it very unworshipful. We certainly did not start jumping up and down with them. Yet, we later came to realize that this was simply their way of expressing their devotion and love for God. There is certainly scripture to support this style of worship.

Don't judge, love and be tolerant of differing styles and details of belief. Jesus and Paul and Peter all say the true test of believers is loving God, following Christ, and loving one another. There is nothing more than this, It is enough.

So the last hundred years of the study of theology, or as it perhaps should be called, churchology, which is different from ecclesiology, has had its focus differentiating between what different churches believe and practice. Now lest you think, "Well, it is a pursuit of knowledge." If only that were the real motivation. Each group is trying to prove their interpretation of the scripture and their style of practice is the right and true Christianity. The others are slightly or greatly off-track.

The love of God and the love of one another becomes secondary to the religious of "I'm right - your wrong." This "churchology message" is a long way from "Theology", God's message as John relates:

1 John 3:11 (NIV)

This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

1 John 3:23 (NIV)

And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us.

We wonder where the power of the Holy Spirit is in the Christian Church today? I believe "Churchology" with its message of "ME - I'm right" is so far from the spirit of love, putting ourselves secondary to others, that it has silenced the Holy Spirit, or at least made it very difficult to hear what the Spirit is saying, and perhaps we don't want to hear the true message. We would have to change the ME FIRST to YOU FIRST.

1 John 4:7-12 (NIV)

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

So we ought to reclaim Theology and not let churchology continue to be the death of Christian Theology. We can make the difference we can reclaim what has been lost. All we need to do is to love God, follow Christ's example, and love one another.

As I have said before, the world will not be won to peace through war. Only love will win the peace. We have to be prepared to lay down our lives in loving one another, never blinking, always believing.

Benediction

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Go in peace and joy, Amen.