

Growing in Christ Lesson 8 4Q 2012

The Church: In Service to Humanity

What do you think about the title?

What does church service to humanity look like?

- Preaching the gospel
- Health care
- Child care – adoption, orphanages, etc.
- Help to the homeless and poor
- Agricultural education and development
- Social development
- Education
- Prison ministry
- Food banks
- Toys for tots
- Addiction programs
- Others?

What do all of these specific interventions have in common? What methods do they practice? What motive? Is the church to reveal God? And what do such service reveal about God's methods?

If the church is to reveal God in our service:

- Should the church require the people in need to get an intercessor to plead with the church before we minister to them?
- Should the church require some payment before we minister?
- Should the church seek to punish those who refuse our ministry?
- Why would such actions be inappropriate?
- But, what if a church teaches God does such things?
 - Crusades

- Inquisition
- Witch trials
- Sunday laws
- Saturday laws
- Political activism – AKA modern day crusades

Can every one of the diversions be presented as a service to humanity? What makes the difference?

Method – I heard a Methodist educator give a sermon once, and he described how he and a group of students were going into the Soviet Union during the height of the Cold War. He reported how they had packed Bibles into their suitcases to distribute once in country. When they came to the boarder crossing they were to be inspected and a discussion arose – should they lie – should they tell the truth? What should they do?

He said, “We cannot win battles for God by using Satan’s methods.” This is brilliant!

So when they got to the boarder, no one lied, but what happened when they were inspecting the passports many of the men had grown beards during the travels and the guards required them to shave in order to match their pictures. The guards were so caught up in laughing at the men shaving they never asked nor inspected the luggage.

“We cannot win battles for God by using Satan’s methods.”

This is brilliant – but sadly too often forgotten, Satan is much more concerned about method than specific conduct. He doesn’t care upon which day you worship, as long as the method and mode of worship is forced, coerced, obligatory, like those who put Christ on the Cross. Once freedom is violated, either by an external human governmental force, or by one’s belief in a punitive God, “obey or I will kill you” then right behavior results in destruction of character and Satan wins.

This is why many young people rebel and leave the church, they cannot separate the method from the specific action. Their God given judgment rebels against ungodly methods, and distortions of God's motive, but when such satanic methods are applied to one of God's truths, both often get tossed.

We must present the truth in harmony with God's character and methods.

Thus, as Christians when we consider service to humanity, we must think beyond mere specifics, but to methods and principles we utilized to implement our plans.

When we think about Godly service, using Godly methods, what is the greatest service we can provide to humanity, that stands above all others? Revealing the truth about God – why?

- Because the goal is eternal healing, not mere temporal healing. Temporal deliverance is to open the mind to an eternal deliverance. And only the truth about God can set the mind free, restore to trust and result in eternal life.

And what are ways to reveal this truth?

- Preaching and teaching
- Healing ministry – the right arm of the gospel
- Helping people in need
- Giving of self for the benefit of others
- And perhaps the most difficult - How we conduct ourselves when attacked and mistreated

In other words, acting out, living out, God's methods of love in our lives – this reveals God to people.

What are ways we are serving humanity in our class?
 What more can we do? Is there something **you** would like to do to add to our ministry to humanity?

Read first paragraph, “For many...” thoughts?

Satan works hard against organized religion? Really?

- Who led the people into apostasy in OT times? Was it the soldiers? The tax collectors? The doctors? The artisans? Or was it the priests?
- Who led the people to reject and crucify Christ? Was it the Romans? The prostitutes? The tax collectors? Or was it the leaders of the organized religion?
- Who led the nations to military conflict in the Dark Ages?
- Who led out in persecuting the Reformers?
- Who do we believe the Bible prophecies will organize the world to oppose the remnant? Organized religion.

So is Satan against organized religion? Not at all, he loves organized religion – what is he against? He is against the truth about God’s character of love, God’s methods of love.

So, when people rail against organized religion, could it be they are railing against how organized religion gets misdirected into misrepresenting God and abusing power?

SUNDAY

Read first paragraph, “When we speak...” thoughts?

From what was the church called out of?

- Paganism?
- Agnosticism?
- Hinduism?
- Judaism?

Called into what?

Called out for what purpose?

The lesson states in the third paragraph that the Jews were called out to be God's special people – for what purpose were the Jews called out?

Were the Jews called out for exclusive salvation? In other words did one have to be a Jew in order to find salvation?

Then why were the Jews called out? Were they called for a specific mission? What was that mission? Were they given any blessings, tools, equipment to accomplish that mission? Such as what?

And what did Jesus say 2000 years ago to those who were seeking to convert people to this “God called out” people?

What would cause someone who was called out of paganism, into “God's chosen” to become twice the son of hell? Can we articulate and specify what would happen in the mind to cause that? Are there specific ideas or beliefs that if brought into the mind, darken the mind and make it harder to find God? What might some of those be, specifically as taught in Judaism?

- God is arbitrary – the Sabbath an arbitrary test of obedience
- God is a respecter of people, meaning he is a racist and prefers descendants of Abraham to others
- God is punitive, don't do what God wants and he punishes
- God requires appeasement – blood must be brought in order to get forgiveness
- God is unfair, he cheats at the temple by exchanging an unfair rates.
- God is a manipulator, there are loopholes to get what one wants, corban to avoid responsibility
- God is selfish, wants to get praise and attention for himself, priests make a show in order to be seen,

- God is sexist and demeans and abuses women requiring them to be subordinate and under the rulership of men

Do we struggle with any of these problems today? Could we convert an atheist to Christianity and actually make them more entrapped into Satan's lies about God?

Read last paragraph, "*Ecclasia* is the..." thoughts? Are they saying that the church is not a particular denomination but each denomination is part of the church?

Then what does it mean to be called out of Babylon because Babylon is fallen? From what are people being called out of? Is it not religious systems, including Christianity, that has lost the truth about God's character of love and his methods of love and replaced the truth with Satan's view that God imposes law and must punish the lawbreaker?

And what are they being called into? A movement that promotes the everlasting Good News that God is love and his methods are the methods of love, exactly as Jesus revealed them to be.

TUESDAY

Read first paragraph, "The church as..." thoughts?

What was Christ's mission?

John 17:4-6:

"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word."

I found this article while trolling through old documents

written in the 19th century. I found it profound, lets go through it and see what was being published and put forth in 1897 regarding Christ's mission to earth, and think if the church continues to present this message, or has something changed:

January 21, 1897 Christ's Mission to Earth.

It is important that we each study to know the reason of the life of Christ in humanity, and what it means to us,--why the Son of God left the courts of heaven,--why he stepped down from his position as Commander of the heavenly angels, who came and went at his bidding,--why he clothed his divinity with humanity, and in lowliness and humility came to the world as our Redeemer. {YI, January 21, 1897 par. 1} [Do we know why? Does the reason make a difference? What reasons have you heard?]

It was the marvel of the heavenly hosts that Christ should come to earth and do as he did,--that his life here should be one of poverty, in such incomparable contrast with his glory in the heavenly courts. He might have come attended by the angelic throng; for the heavenly angels would have regarded themselves as honored in being his body-guard, in serving and worshiping him. But we read that "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." Christ's entire life was one of self-denial. He received of his Father that he might impart to others. {YI, January 21, 1897 par. 2} [what is being described? Is a certain "law" being described? And what did Christ reveal about his character? And who did he reveal? Why was it necessary to reveal this? Was this part of the reason he came?]

Before the universe of heaven, Christ condescended to take upon him the form of humanity, and stand among the lowly ones of earth, that he might reach them where they were, and by precept and example teach them, that though among the poor and oppressed, they might be pure, and true, and noble. [why did he come as a

human? To reach us because we couldn't comprehend him and to teach us what?] He came to reveal to the world that the life and character need not become contaminated amid poverty and lowliness. The lily that rests upon the bosom of the lake may be surrounded with weeds and unsightly debris, yet, unsullied, it opens its fragrant white blossom to the sunlight. It strikes its channeled stem down through the mass of rubbish to the pure sands beneath. Refusing everything that would defile, it gathers to itself only those properties that will develop into the spotless, fragrant flower... {YI, January 21, 1897 par. 3} [Do we believe this is true for us? Can we choose to act as Christ acted? Can we choose to fill the mind with truth, wholesome things and refuse the defiling stuff?]

We would ask you, dear young men and women, Will you accept this Jesus as your personal Saviour? Will you consider the life of Christ? His was a life of perfect obedience. He came to live the holy law of God in human nature. {YI, January 21, 1897 par. 5} [what did Christ reveal in his life about God's holy law? Is the obedience of Christ different than that of the Pharisees who prided themselves on obedience to the law? Were they proclaiming obedience to two different laws? What then was the difference?]

The subject of obedience involves eternal interests. **Through his misrepresentation of God, Satan had made the law appear as an arbitrary exaction, enforced by God to keep his creatures from a higher education in the knowledge of good and evil.** [what did Satan do? He misrepresented God and did what to the law? Made it appear imposed, arbitrary, which means what? It was no longer understood as the law upon which life was built. And God is presented as an enforcer of law. Do we find this depiction of God going on in Christianity today?] It was this knowledge of evil that the Lord did not wish our first parents to obtain. He wanted them to be wise through understanding only that which it was for their happiness to know. But by the

disobedience of Adam, the flood-gates of woe were opened upon our world. It was then that Christ offered himself as man's substitute and surety, and consented to come to earth, and meet the tempter, **who, through falsifying the character and purposes of God, had caused the ruin of our first parents.** {YI, January 21, 1897 par. 6} [How did Satan ruin our first parents? Then would Christ's mission need to deal with those falsifications? And who did Christ come to meet on the field of battle? He came to defeat Satan, Christ did not come to confront his Father and pay his Father with a sacrifice.]

Adam received the commandments of God, and disobeyed them. In this he became disloyal to God; he dishonored him, and was classed as one with the first apostate. In yielding to temptation, he forfeited the light and favor of God. [what does forfeited mean? In tying weights on his legs and jumping in the ocean he forfeited the light of the sun and the favor of oxygen] But though Adam broke away from its claim, **the law of God did not lose one jot or tittle of its force. The Lord did not change one precept of his law, in order to meet man in his fallen condition. [Why?] ... But in order to meet its claims, the Lord made an offering for sin, in the person of Jesus Christ, thus demonstrating to the world the immutability of his law.** While he expressed his love for men, in giving his Son to die for them, he declared that its divine statutes cannot be changed or abolished. {YI, January 21, 1897 par. 7}

What does this mean? Meet the claims of the law? What did Christ need to do to meet the claims of the law and why was it necessary?

From the same author:

The law requires righteousness,--a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and

developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, **through the forbearance of God.** More than this, **Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ.** God can "be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Romans 3:26. {DA 762.2}

Thoughts? What is being described? Christ's mission is just as Scripture teaches to:

- Reveal the truth about the Father John 17:4-6
- Destroy him who holds the power of death that is the devil Heb 2:14
- Destroy death and bring life and immortality to light. 2Tim 1:9,10
- Destroy the devil's work 1Jn 3:8, and the devil's work is to destroy the image of God in man and replace it with the image of Satan (set himself up in God's temple proclaiming himself to be God)

Christ came to reveal the truth to win us to trust, reveal Satan as liar and fraud, and to fix mankind, to restore the human species back into what God created mankind in Adam to be.

Why is the truth of God's character and the work of Christ so poorly understood? I found this in my trolling through old material, and it humbled me. And I pray not to allow myself to become like this, but realize I am tempted to be just like this:

Christ had many truths to give to His disciples, of which He could not speak, **because they did not advance with the light** that was flashed upon the Levitical laws and the sacrificial offerings. **They did not embrace the light, advance with the light,** and follow on to still greater

brightness as Providence should lead the way. {16MR 123.1}

And for the same reason Christ's disciples of 1897 do not comprehend important matters of truth. So dull has been the comprehension of even those who teach the truth to others that many things cannot be opened to them until they reach heaven. It ought not to be so. But as men's minds become narrow, they think they know it all, and set one stake after another in points of truths of which they have only a glimpse. **They close their minds as though there were no more for them to learn, and should the Lord attempt to lead them on, they would not take up with the increased light.** They cling to the spot where they think they see a glimmer of light, when it is only a link in the living chain of truths and promises to be studied. They know very little of what it means to follow in the footsteps of Christ. {16MR 123.2}

The harmonious relation of truth, like links in a chain, will, just as fast as the mind is quickened by the Spirit of God to comprehend light and in humbleness of mind appropriate it, **be dispensed to others**, and give the glory back to God. The development of truth will be the reward to the humble-hearted seeker, who will fear God and walk with Him. **The truth which the mind grasps as truth is capable of constant expansion and new developments. While beholding it, the truth is seen in all its bearings in the life and character, and becomes more clear and certain and beautiful. As the mind grasps it in its preciousness, it becomes elevated, ennobled, sanctified.** -124- {16MR 123.3}

Thoughts?

Last paragraph in Tuesday's lesson tells us that evangelism is the mission of the church – what do you understand evangelism to be?

Is it first and foremost bringing people the truth about God and Christ, to convert them to Christ? Or is it about

converting people to denominations? Is there a difference or is it the same thing?

MONDAY

The lesson talks about unity in the church, that we should be one as Jesus and the Father are one, that in Christ there is neither slave or free, Jew or Gentile, but all made one in Christ.

What does this mean on a practical level? What does it look like in the world today?

Read bottom pink section – “Some people...” thoughts?

What do you think about this analogy? Does the church ever turn on its own?

In the body when autoimmune reactions happen is there something wrong with the body or the immune system or could it be either?

Often, something happens that legitimately triggers an immune response, but then once the offending agent is dealt with by the immune system cannot calm itself down and begins attacking the body.

In the church, could it be that a legitimate issue needed to be addressed, but the process of addressing a particular problem changes the focus away from Christ and once our eyes are off Christ we start seeing more and more human foibles, problems, defects and go ever deeper into the “clean up the other people” mode of action?

What about ecumenicalism? If we are to be united, why do many oppose ecumenicalism?

WEDNESDAY

Read third paragraph, “There is no question...” thoughts?

Are there points that, if held in common, enhance and promote unity? What might those be?

- God’s character of love
- The law of love as the design template of life, the principle of giving
- Sin as a deviation of the design for life that inherently causes pain, suffering and death
- That love only exists in an atmosphere of freedom
- That all people are infected with the same terminal condition
- That all people are of equal value and moral worth
- Others?

Are there beliefs that have as a consequence the incitation of division?

- God is authoritarian and uses power to rule over
- God’s law is arbitrary
- God requires appeasement or payment
- God plays favorites, likes Jews better than Gentiles and men better than women, and whites better than blacks

What did Jesus reveal about God when he was here?

THURSDAY

Read last paragraph, “We need to remember...” thoughts?

What does it mean to respect church authority? Where do we draw the line between bowing to church authority and refusing to do so?

Did church authorities come to Christ and attempt to direct his ministry? Did he surrender to church authority?

Okay, what about the followers since?

Should Martin Luther have surrendered to church authority when he was ordered to recant? Why or why not?

What about other reformers?

What if today a church board voted for a member to stop teaching a Bible Study Class – what action should a person take?

Can a church exercise authority in violation of the truth? So if a church board votes to take action against advancing truth, should a member follow that directive?

Where does genuine authority come from?

If someone in office speaks a lie are they speaking with authority? Which was more authoritative, Bill Clinton's denial of a relationship, or Monica's dress?

FRIDAY

Read and discuss questions 1-4