

Tradition or Truth? The Church (Part 2)

"To dwell above with the saints we love,
O that will be glory!
But to dwell below with the saints we know -
Well, that's another story!"

The truth of the matter is quite simple: to be brought near to God in Christ is to be brought near to one another in Christ. Once there were "Jew-ones" and "Gentile-ones", "male-ones" and "female-ones", "black-ones" and "white-ones"... now in Christ we are all "Christ-ones" (Ga 3:26-28).

Contrary to the traditions of man human beings do not create the church. A Christian church is the result of God's action, His re-creation among us. We may try through all manner of organizational goals, doctrinal agreement, and small group activity to design and develop successful institutions. Yet if our calling is not to be successful, but rather to mediate the sacred... if it is not to share functional responsibilities, but rather to share our lives... if it is not to keep the machinery running, but rather to be on mission together... then the end result of our man-made constructs can only be the increase of frustration, fatigue, and failure among us.

To such weary and burdened ones (Matt 11:28-30) Jesus offers grace for the task, empowerment for the load. To trust Him (not what works), to labor in love (not law), to live by truth (not tradition) is to live from our loving oneness with God the Father, Son, and Spirit... and with each other. A holy atmosphere in which self-centeredness, deception, manipulation, individualism, and the like find it hard to breath! Self-interested relations create a society of sovereign selves in which true oneness of community cannot exist.

By God's say so - the Truth - this is not who we are (sovereign selves), why we are (self-interested relations), or what we're about (self-preferential). The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is other-centered by nature. Our relations are determined by the best interest of the other. And we prefer to facilitate the liberty and maturity of the other above our own. Love never lives for itself. Such communities of love built upon the Truth - what God says - and not upon tradition - what man says - are the God-designated cultures of transformation here on earth! Nothing less than the truth will suffice.

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Christmas Heroes

Although Jesus is certainly the Star of Christmas, Joseph and Mary are my heroes in the Christmas narrative. When the uninvited angel of God came crashing into their lives, there was no room left for any of their previous plans for a nice, conventional Jewish wedding or family! Both of them started in fear (Matt 1:20; Lk 1:30) yet ended in faith (Matt 1:24; Lk 1:38).

The word of the Lord frequently invades with its attending ministry of upheaval. It (He) intruded upon Joseph's social status and business affairs (remember that trip to Egypt?). It (He) intruded upon Mary's reputation and romantic dreams (not to mention her very womb). And don't forget, these are God's "favored ones" (Lk 1:28) - the ones He likes!

And what makes them heroes of mine? Joseph "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him." Mary responded, "Be it done to me according to Your word." (If Joseph was a he-ro, does that make Mary a she-ro?)

Every time we say "Yes, Lord", the Word of the Lord is born into our world. When we bring our "Yes, Lord" into our world - of fear, of temptation, of conflict, of doubt... - what is "born of God overcomes the world." (I Jo 5:4) A "hero", or a "she-ro", rises to victory every time we trust in Him.

May you be a Christmas hero... to the glory of God and to the good of all you share your holidays with this year!

DECEMBER

3,10,17,24

CCF

** (no CCF service on 12/31)

5th

12

****Ocala Bible Study **NOTE CHANGE**

Alachua Study

JANUARY

11-15

San Antonio, TX (210-478-0618)

FEBRUARY

16-18

Florida Retreat (**see below)



2018 Florida Retreat



Tradition or Truth?

February 16 - 18, 2018 - Gainesville, Florida

\$50 deposit due by January 16, 2018 (for guaranteed room)

\$305 Couple - (meals and room)

\$250 Single - 1 to room (meals and room)

\$165 Single - 2 to room (meals and room)

\$75 conference and meals (no room)

\$20 conference fee (no meals, no room)

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