

January 24, 2016

Jesus and his Church

"For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love may have power, together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work in us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever: Amen!" Ephesians 3:14-21

If we were asked to identify the core issue for those who follow Jesus what would we say? I am convinced that the best answer we could offer is: It's all about the relationships! As we have discussed more than once, it is impossible to practice our beliefs as those who follow Jesus outside of our relationships.

In the beginning God existed in relationship with the Son and with the Holy Spirit. That relationship is so close as to make the three forms of God in the Godhead indistinguishable. Initially God created man to share in an intimate and personal relationship with him. When the Creator acknowledged that ***"It is not good for the man to be alone..."*** (Genesis 2:18) he created woman to be man's perfect partner in relationship.

After man's sin had separated him, God worked to renew that close, personal relationship through the mystery of Jesus Christ. Jesus became the bridge over which you and I could cross so that we can once again share in that intimate relationship with the Father.

In his people Israel, and in his people the church, God has created relationships in which we can exist in intimacy fulfilling our greatest need. Our reflection of who we are as disciples of Jesus is our existence in relationship. We cannot claim to have an intimate and life changing relationship with the master and not have that relationship lived out in the church, in the marriage and in the family. Jesus will teach us that the world will recognize us for what we are by how we love one another.

Jesus prayer for us on the last night before his death was, ***"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."*** (John 17:20-21) It is in our unity in relationship that we fulfill the purpose that the Father has set for us, and the reason he has called us to become part of his family.

That being said, how destructive is it when our relationships within the church, within the marriage, within the family, or within our communities are fractured by our self-serving behaviors? The key to understanding the church and its intended functions is, I believe, to understand the sacrificed self that is the beginning of our relationship with Jesus. As those who follow Jesus we cannot participate in a fractured world. We must exemplify in our interactions with one another that we live by a different standard.

The church that the Father gives to Jesus is a church that is devoted to fellowship, to being together, to being one. It is a church that is marked by selfless service where no one has

need and everyone participates together. If we would become the church that Jesus died to save then we must begin by being transformed ourselves. It is not what the church does or doesn't do. Ultimately it is what I, as an individual, choose to do. If it is all about relationships, then it is really all about my relationships and how I choose to live within them.