

“The Christian Commission in Difficult Times”

Scripture Reading: LUKE 11:24-26

-) I want to do church a little different today. As you can see, I am here at BGCC speaking to an empty room. And that is OK. I am certainly practicing social distancing. And I know this is Mother’s Day, but unfortunately, I do not have a Mother’s Day message. Happy Mother’s Day!
-) I have titled today’s message “*The Christian Commission in Difficult Times.*” And throughout this message I will be showing the related PowerPoint slides.
-) We are in our 8th week of this global pandemic quarantine which has all of us either very fearful to one extreme to very uncaring to the other, and everywhere in between.
-) And this world situation has made us all look at things in a different way. Perhaps we are re-evaluating our own personal priorities in life—how we spent our time and who we spend that time with. Is this really important or is that really important anymore? Maybe the things we always took for granted we will no longer take for granted.
-) Or perhaps we have a different view on how we need to “*love our neighbor*” in a different way.
-) But I am convinced one thing will not change. We would all conclude that America has some serious moral and social issues and we would all like to see these issues fixed. Right?
-) We want our society to be exactly what we would like our society to be. So, what should our response be as Christians in this great American society and times of ours?

-) So, let's identify the problem. The problem is not in the ghetto. The problem is not in the crack houses or the meth labs. The problem is not in the White House or in the senate or in congress. The problem is not the abortion clinics or Planned Parenthood. The problem is not gun violence. The problem is not in China. The problem is not in what can be found on the internet, or bad lyrics in songs, or terrible TV programming.
-) So, where is the problem? Ready? The problem is on the inside of every human being. JEREMIAH 17:9 tells us this: "*The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?*" ROMANS 6:16 tells us that the unsaved person is a slave to sin. The unsaved person needs a new master.
-) There are four restraints God has given us. And for every restraint there is a deterrent. 1) Self with the conscience. 2) Family with parental discipline and the rod. 3) Government with the sword.
-) And if the conscience does not work, and if parental discipline does not work, and if government laws do not work, then that leaves the fourth restraint. And that restraint is the church, us. And the deterrent we use is what? The deterrent is the gospel of Jesus Christ.
-) Let's sum this up. If we want to see issues in America cleaned up, then people need to be cleaned up. Not by conscience (didn't work). Not by the rod. And not by the sword. Cleaned up on the inside by the gospel.
-) And that only happens one way. The unsaved person needs a circumcision of the heart. The unsaved person needs to hear the good news. The unsaved person needs to repent of their sin. The unsaved person needs to believe the gospel message of Jesus Christ. Faith comes by hearing and hearing through the Word of Christ.

-) Folks, America will not change until hearts are changed. Jesus Christ is the only influence in this universe that can take an old creature of sin and turn him into a new creation in Christ.
-) Listen. I cannot change a sinner into a saint and neither can you. But we can certainly introduce that sinner to the only One who can change them from a sinner into a saint. And that, my friend, is called evangelism and we all have the responsibility to do that in the way we have been gifted to do that.
-) But I am convinced that the church has become so impotent with all these false and fake gospels being preached today, that people don't want a Savior. They want a genie.
-) So, what's the truth? 2COR 5:17-21 tells us that we have been given the ministry of reconciliation—not the ministry of our best life now. Since we have been reconciled to Christ, we must therefore share the gospel (treasures in jars of clay) so others can also be reconciled to Christ as we have been. We are Christ's ambassadors. Explain.
-) If a society is going to get "*better*" then hearts need to be changed and only a saving relationship with Jesus Christ can do that. We can't clean up an unsaved person. But we can introduce them to the One who can, and His name is Jesus.
-) So, that's our commission as Christians and we know it as the Great Commission.
-) Let's shift gears here for a second.
-) Did you know that the Bible never ever commands a Christian to directly clean up the unsaved? As a matter of fact, in 1COR 5 we are not even to judge the unsaved. "*What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside.*"
-) We share the gospel with those outside the church.

-) I assure you, there are many well-intentioned Christians who would rather spend their time, their energy, and their resources cleaning up America on the outside. And those efforts are certainly well-intentioned. But that's all they are.
-) Here's what these people are thinking. Wouldn't it be great if we could start some sort of movement by political means, or using some other legal means we have at our disposal here in our democratic society of America, that we could somehow convince more and more Americans to be against abortion, and to be against homosexuality, and to be against pornography, and stealing, and lying, etc. Just think how much "*better*" America would be if Christians could raise the morality of all Americans.
-) Sounds good at first, right? I would prefer living in a society like that. But today, I want to take the time to discuss what happens when we spend our time, energy, and resources on cleaning up America on the outside. Here's a few things we all need to think about.
-) Cleaning up unbelieving America on the outside ...
-) **FITB 1.** Is not our **COMMISSION**. What is our commission? Our commission is the ministry of reconciliation. We are ambassadors for Christ. We are to go into all the world and preach the gospel. As a Christian I am never commanded to clean up the soul of an unbeliever. My commission is to share the gospel with that lost person.
-) **FITB 2.** Sets us up for **FAILURE** and **FRUSTRATION**. Why? Because we can't do it. We want to see the results of our work. And when people do not respond according to our standards and expectations, we will get frustrated. Remember the problem is in the heart and that heart needs changed, and only God can do that. We are attempting to fight a battle we alone cannot win. And that can or will lead to failure and frustration.

-) Cleaning up unbelieving America on the outside ...
-) **FITB 3.** Questions our concern for their **SOUL**. Now we are more concerned how they act on the outside more than what their soul looks like on the inside. Where is the real love and concern for the unbeliever? Is it in how they act or is it in where they will spend eternity?
-) **FITB 4.** Decreases our focus on the **KINGDOM OF GOD**. And this is where we are at today folks. In JOHN 18:36, Jesus says this to Pilate: "*My Kingdom is not of this world.*" 1PETER 1:1 says this: "*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as **aliens**, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*"
-) Augusta/Nelson County in Virginia in the USA on this planet earth is not my home. I am an alien here. My home is in heaven. So, there is a very large part of me that simply says that I will leave this country and this pandemic into the hands of Almighty God and I will focus my efforts on kingdom work.
-) Christians today have this idea that somehow, we have to posture America politically for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. None of the apostles ever tried to do that. The early church never tried to do that. And we can't do it through political means. Listen, the government cannot save you. O, they may send you a corona stimulus check. But that doesn't buy you a ticket into heaven.
-) **FITB 5.** Makes human influence their motive and not **SCRIPTURE**. By what motive would the unbeliever begin doing these moral things? Maybe it's because it's the law, or maybe it's a matter of money, or persuasive speech, or media events, or even pressure groups forcing people to do things.
-) Let me ask. What is our motive to behave morally? Because we are obedient to what? To Scripture. To the Word of God. And our moral behavior brings glory to God.

-) Cleaning up unbelieving America on the outside ...
-) **FITB 6.** Only has one NT example and that is that of the **PHARISEES.** In Jesus' time, who was the moral majority? The Pharisees.
-) Who was the only group of people that Jesus ever showed righteous anger towards? The Pharisees. The religious leaders. Who were whitewashed tombs on the outside but were full of dead men's bones on the inside? The Pharisees.
-) The pendulum can swing the other way. Wanting to clean up Americans strictly on the outside means we risk our society becoming dominated by the mandates of self-righteous, cruel, merciless legalists (like the Pharisees) who will lay heavy burdens on people. I'm a Christian and I don't want that. And Jesus didn't either.
-) Being moral on the outside with no change happening on the inside makes one a Pharisee.
-) Cleaning up unbelieving America on the outside ...
-) **FITB 7.** Invites unequally yoked **RELATIONSHIPS.** Example: Through my persuasive power as a Christian I convince a few Mormons and a few Muslims and a few Atheists and a few Hindus and a few other unbelievers that abortion is wrong. They didn't agree at first but now they do. And we decide to form a movement that will discourage women from having abortions and doctors from performing abortions.
-) That's great. And it's starting to work.
-) At some point in time I introduce the fact that we should counsel these women and doctors with the message and hope of Jesus Christ. What will happen to this movement? It blows up. Because you see on the inside the Mormon and the Muslim and the Atheist and the Hindu and the unbeliever hate Jesus and Christianity.

-) And that is why we are told in 2COR 6: "*Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship has light with darkness, what agreement has Christ with Satan? Come out from among them and be separated.*"
-) Cleaning up unbelieving America on the outside ...
-) **FITB 8.** Will give the unbeliever a false sense of eternal **HOPE.**
-) What do the majority of people living on the face of this earth believe will get them into heaven? (last week) Good works. And that's exactly what Oprah will tell you and more people will believe Oprah than will believe the Word of God.
-) So now that the unbeliever has his or her morality straightened out, they believe now, more than ever, that their stairway to heaven is all set. And you and I led them to that point. Instead of telling them they needed Jesus, you convinced them they needed to clean up their act. I don't want to be responsible for sealing that eternal damning fate on another human being.
-) **FITB 9.** Makes us, the Christian, selective as to what **SIN** we want cleaned up. Sure, we would like to shut down the abortion clinics, but why don't we want to shut down gossip? We would like to see a moratorium on homosexuality, pedophilia, and pornography. How about a moratorium of pride, lust, envy, greed, gluttony, anger, and sloth? Laziness which is what many of us may have become during this time of quarantine.
-) Where is effort to eliminate these sins? Are they not as offensive to God as the others? We have no problem dealing with the unbeliever who uses bad language or steals paper clips, pens, paper, and yellow highlighters from work. If we want to go after America's immorality, then let's indict the whole nation for not loving God which Jesus said is the greatest commandment.

-) If we, as Christians, really want to get to the heart of the matter, then we need to get to the heart because that is what is the matter. Convincing an unbeliever to change morally on the outside solves nothing. And I just gave you nine reasons why it actually it makes matters worse.
-) And that's why I read the Scripture from LUKE 11 earlier. What does that Scripture have to do with what I just said about cleaning up unbelieving America on the outside? Everything.
-) When an unbeliever becomes morally right on the outside without Christ on the inside, it is like this unclean spirit in verse 24 that just left home. OK. I got rid of the pornography in my life.
-) But what happens next? The unclean spirit comes back and finds the house, this same unbeliever, swept clean and put in order. No more pornography. But when this immoral spirit of pornography left, the void was not replaced with anything else. No Jesus. No salvation. No repentance. No new creation.
-) And now this person is ripe for this same spirit to move back in along with seven others more evil than itself. And now this unbeliever has become worse that it was at the beginning.
-) I said I titled today's message "*The Christian Commission in Difficult Times.*" Folks, this is our commission all the time. It doesn't change regardless of the times.
-) Folks, I want America to be a better and a more moral place to live. I really do. And I think you do too. So, let's go about doing that the right way. Let's tell unbelieving America about Jesus. Let's plant. Let's water. And let's pray. And then we watch God make it grow.

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