

Saturday, July 30, 2005

The Christian whose work led to the abolition of slavery

Today the Church Calendar commemorates William Wilberforce who served God in the British Parliament. "He was a major supporter of programs for popular education, overseas missions, parliamentary reform, and religious liberty. He is best known, however, for his untiring commitment to the abolition of slavery and the slave trade. He introduced his first anti-slavery motion in the House of Commons in 1788, in a three-and-a-half hour oration that concluded: "Sir, when we think of eternity and the future consequence of all human conduct, what is there in this life that shall make any man contradict the dictates of his conscience, the principles of justice and the law of God!"

The motion was defeated. Wilberforce brought it up again every year for eighteen years, until the slave trade was finally abolished on 25 March 1806. He continued the campaign against slavery itself, and the bill for the abolition of all slavery in British territories passed its crucial vote just four days before his death on 29 July 1833. A year later, on 31 July 1834, 800,000 slaves, chiefly in the British West Indies, were set free." [written by James Kiefer, found on Oremus]

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 07:34

Friday, July 29, 2005

QT Thots

I often think of Jesus as now the exalted King, enthroned above, reigning in Heaven and on Earth. In today NT reading <http://www.oremus.org/oremus.cgi?f> I am reminded that Jesus had close personal friends, women and men whom he visited in their homes and with whom he could relax. As a man, Jesus needed companionship, even as he needed food and sleep. He was, after all, human. We hear much about his public life, his ministry. We know he was a people-person; not living as a hermit or recluse. He had his solitary Quiet Times of prayer and devotion, but most of the time he was with people, on a mission. He often talked with individuals, like the woman at the well and Zaccheus, but that is not the same as enjoying friendships. It is said that the Apostle John was his closest friend- not just an Apostle, but a friend, the closest. There were others. Jesus stayed with Peter, at his home, on occasion. But the friends mentioned most are Mary, Martha and Lazarus: two sisters and a brother. Jesus spent time with them at their house. We learn a lot about them. They shared sorrow and joy. They lavished attention on Jesus and he accepted that. Jesus cried when Lazarus passed away. Meditating on all this, I am moved to think of people in my life who are my friends. I know a lot of people. I can be a very out-going, social person; but, I have few real friends. I am very grateful for them. My best friend is my wife. This morning I am giving extra prayers of thanksgiving to God for them [they are His gifts to me] and asking Him to bless each of them in a special way. I must seek ways to bless them, too.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 08:44

Tuesday, July 26. 2005

A Parent's Anxiety and Comfort

Today the Church calendar commemorates the unknown parents of Mary, mother of Jesus. They could have never known what their baby daughter would experience in her lifetime. They could not have known what would happen to her after she met Joseph. They must have had their share of anxiety. But, perhaps, they drew comfort from the promises in Psalm 121:5 The LORD watches over you—he will watch over your life; 6 the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. It is comforting to know that the Lord loves our children more than we do. And certainly He is stronger, wiser and far better able to care for them than we are. And here is the promise that He will always be with them, wherever they may go, watching and caring for them, forever! Truly, a parent's greatest comfort. 7 The LORD will keep you from all harm—This, too, is very comforting; but, reality check: we know of children who have been harmed: children of Believers, of people who have claimed the promises of this Psalm. What happened? Is this promise false? Bad things do happen to God's People. The Psalmist certainly knew that in his own life. The promise of v. 7 often has been demonstrated; in fact, more than we can know; but taken literally, at face value only, it can lead to some bitter

disillusionment with Scripture (You can't believe it) and, worse, with God (You can't trust Him after all)

Sometimes the verse means God will keep you from all harm- in the long run. In the end, terrible things will work out for the good. This is true and we are wise to take the long view of all things (keeping perspective). Sometimes it means, God will keep the terrible things from harming your soul. They won't "get to you". You will overcome them. God will keep you, preserve you, give you peace and strength, as you go through the terrible experiences that do happen. This also has proven true to untold numbers of Saints. Interpreted in these ways, Psalm 121:7, can give believing parents comfort as their children grow up and move out into the world. Parents and child are both in the Lord's Hand always and in all ways.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:27

Monday, July 25, 2005

QT Thots

We have been horrified when we read about beheadings in Iraq by Terrorists. Beheading was the fate of James, the Apostle. He was the first of the Twelve to suffer martyrdom. This is the day in the Church Calendar when we remember him. At that time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over all the world; and this took place during the reign of Claudius. The disciples determined that according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea; this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul. About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. (Acts 11-12) This was a tough time in the history of our Church. I purposely write "our"- it is very important to know and remember our Heritage and History and to keep continuity with the Church that goes back to the Apostles. [An epitaph on a tombstone said, "I want to thank my parents. Without them I would not be here."] On Patriotic Holidays we rightfully are thankful for those who gave their lives to secure and protect our freedoms as Americans. We should be even more thankful for those Brothers and Sisters in Christ who have given their lives to preserve and pass on the Gospel, through ages past, so that we can have our freedom in Christ today. Are we willing to do that for the next Generation?

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 09:22

Friday, July 22, 2005

QT Thots

The first person to believe in the resurrection of Jesus, the first person to see the Resurrected Jesus and the first person to witness to the truth of the Resurrection was a woman- Mary Magdalene: , considered by many to have once been a demon possessed prostitute See

<http://www.oremus.org/oremus.cgi?f>Today she is honored in the Church Calendar: a very unlikely "Apostle to the Apostles" It is always encouraging to know that God can and does use all kinds of people to serve Him- often the most marginalized or lowly, whom society does not value. The aspect of Mary's story in today's Gospel reading that especially struck me was that, while Jesus stood next to Mary, she did not at first recognize him, like the disciples on the road to Emmaus. They came to recognize him in the breaking of bread. Mary recognized him in the sound of his voice as he uttered her name. I wonder how many times the Lord has been with me and I did not know it. Oh Lord, give me eyes to see, ears to hear and a heart to receive You today.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 10:59

Thursday, July 21, 2005

Terrorists, Freedom Fighters or Human Beings?

Last night we saw a POV documentary on our local Public TV channel. It was the alarming, disturbing story of the current effort of Albanians living in this country to finance and supply a guerilla army, "freedom fighters", fighting in Kosovo [they pronounced it Kuh SOV ah] against the dominant Serbians. It is an area now under NATO control. Many American troops once fought there [Bosnia- all parts of the old Yugoslavia]. The film showed these Albanians, here in America, openly going about buying and shipping arms of all kinds to Kosovo. Supporters of the IRA in Ireland have been doing the same thing. It's all legal, but is this right? Aren't these people terrorists?

These Albanians insist they are not terrorists because they do not purposely target civilians, only enemy military troops. The film showed them enjoying life here in the USA where they are employed, living normal-looking lives among us. The Leader is even a citizen of the US. But he made no bones about it- he and his cohorts are Albanians who love their country, are fighting for it and will die to secure its freedom from the Serbs. That is their entire focus- what they live to do. One has to admire their commitment, but is it right? One of the ironies is that these Albanians are Moslems while the Serbs, who are indeed guilty of atrocities against the Albanians, are Orthodox Christians. But this is not about religion. It is about politics. It is, most of all, about ethnicity and culture. There was media coverage yesterday about the large Latino Convention at which the Chairman of each of the National (Political) Parties spoke and about the effort of both Parties to attract the Latino vote. Note: The media used "Latino" and "Hispanic" interchangeably, but the emphasis seemed to be on appealing to Mexican-Americans and people from Latin America who are coming to this country in record numbers. The conferees wanted to be told what each Party would do for them- again, it was a group of people who are motivated most by ethnicity and culture. Reaction to the nomination of Judge Roberts to be a Justice on the Supreme Court was negative to many simply on the basis that he is not a she. Add gender concerns to ethnicity and culture. Personally, I would do away with all hyphenated names and labels. There will never be peace in Iraq between the Shiites and Sunni or between Palestinians and Israelis or between "Blacks" and "Whites" or between ethnic Albanians and non-ethnic Albanians until we all first and foremost see ourselves as HUMAN BEINGS. There are no such things as "Races". There is only the Human Race- all are the children of Adam. This is not unrealistic idealism on my part. It is fact. It is Biblical and insisting on it as the starting point for all our relationships is absolutely necessary. Even Christians would do well to realize and recognize that we, too, are Human. We would be better Christians, if we were better at being Human. more later-

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:16

A Business for Christ

The one word which summarizes the Biblical teaching about the use of possessions and money is STEWARDSHIP. This includes not only individual stewardship, but corporate; not only churches, but businesses, too. A friend of a friend recently decided to tithe the income of the good-sized business he owns. He already runs the business, and treats his employees, according to Biblical principles; but, this is an additional step of faith. The corporate Tithe is going to various Ministries. Praise the Lord. This is exciting- a good thing! The Christian author of a currently popular book on business management describes how he and his partner built their very large corporation using Biblical principles. His book is Joy at Work and the 10 principles may be found at- <http://www.dennisbakke.com/pages/Home> His second principle is "The purpose of business is not to maximize profits for shareholders but to steward our resources to serve the world in an economically sustainable way." Check out the other nine.

Posted by Cal at 14:56

Wednesday, July 20, 2005

America's Largest Church

Started 46 years ago in a feed store, Lakewood Church in Houston TX occupied its new building this past weekend. Lakewood secured a 30-year lease to the Compaq Center from the city for \$11.8 million – paid up front – in 2001. The church took over the center in 2003, and began \$95 million in renovations. What was once a basketball court has now been turned into a theatre with seats that slope up from a stage complete with waterfalls, according to the Houston Chronicle. It will seat 30,000 people. The Rev. Joel Osteen, popular author and TV preacher, is senior pastor. Pastor Osteen apparently does a great job inspiring and motivating people and must give them what they want to attract such a crowd. But is this really of the Lord?

I have become convinced that the church that the Lord will use most effectively to communicate the Gospel and truly make a difference in today's world will be a church which incarnates [embodies and manifests] the life of Jesus Christ in a small town, or neighborhood in a city, where its members live. It will be known for 5 characteristics-1. Spirit-led Worship2. Intercessory Prayer3. Personal holiness4. Servant and prophetic ministries5. Suffering [a consequence of 1-4] This may be its most ineffective witness. It will not be known for the size of its attendance or building.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:34

Tuesday, July 19, 2005

Change

Last Saturday, we visited the campus of our alma mater, the University of Connecticut. We graduated from there 45 years ago. It is not the same. Here and there, a building remains from our day, but, by and large, the campus is very different. All the broad expanses of lawn have long been filled in with buildings and parking lots. Places where we spent time- from the Library, Student Union, Field House, dorms and coffee houses- are gone or renovated into something else. I know what is taught there is very different too, as intellectual fashions change along with hairstyles and clothes. The college we enjoyed lives on mostly in our memories. It was depressing. The new campus is modern, booming and exciting. And it is reality. There is no going back, nor would we want it to.

Yesterday, I read an article in a missionary magazine in which the writer was reviewing the way the world of missions has changed since he began his career in it some 30 years ago. The changes have been as major as the ones we saw at UConn. He was happy about it. The point of his article was that the missionaries and their agencies that have adopted the new methods are far more able to effectively communicate the Gospel in today's world than those who are resisting making changes. The latter are on their way to obsolescence. They have become irrelevant- answering questions that no one is asking anymore or using language that no one speaks (or listens to). He is concerned about those missionaries that fear the new world and the new ways, or simply do not want to deal with them, but prefer rather to retreat into isolation just because they are comfortable there. Change is painful and adaption can cost a lot. What we saw at UConn and reading this article have given me a lot to think about.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 11:16

Monday, July 18. 2005

Q T Thots

Today's Hymn from Oremus <http://www.oremus.org/hymnal/e/e038.html>

Eternal Father, strong to save, whose arm hath bound the restless wave,
who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep its own appointed limits keep:

O hear us when we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea. When we think of those serving our country in the Navy, this is a wonderful prayer to use on their behalf. But, also for all who work on the sea (far more commercial fisherman die on the job than firefighters and police officers combined).

O Christ, whose voice the waters heard and hushed their raging at thy word,
who walkedst on the foaming deep, and calm amid the storm didst sleep;

O hear us when we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea. Of course, many others traveling by ship need our prayers, too

Most Holy Spirit, who didst brood upon the chaos dark and rude,
and bid its angry tumult cease, and give, for wild confusion, peace:

O hear us when we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea. But I am especially thinking this morning of those whose lives are like storm-tossed ships. Of those whose minds and hearts are in wild confusion- Make their inner tumult cease, O Lord. Grant them your peace.

O Trinity of love and power, our brethren shield in danger's hour;
from rock and tempest, fire and foe, protect them wheresoe'er they go;
thus evermore shall rise to thee glad hymns of praise from land and sea.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 08:36

Friday, July 15, 2005

Definitions of Hispanic and Latino

In an earlier post I mentioned Hispanics. My main topic was cultural diversity and the challenge and opportunity it is to the local church to have people of several ethnic or cultural groups in the area. My concern was to appreciate cultural differences and the necessity to communicate the Gospel accordingly. Please check out the comments to that post below. I am referring to common, popular usage in this area. Here is how one dictionary defines "Hispanic" and "Latino". It illustrates some of the issues.

The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language: Fourth Edition. 2000. Hispanic ADJECTIVE:1. Of or relating to Spain or Spanish-speaking Latin America. 2. Of or relating to a Spanish-speaking people or culture. NOUN:1. A Spanish-speaking person. 2. A U.S. citizen or resident of Latin-American or Spanish descent. ETYMOLOGY: Latin *Hispanicus*, from *Hispania*, Spain. USAGE NOTE: Though often used interchangeably in American English, Hispanic and Latino are not identical terms, and in certain contexts the choice between them can be significant. Hispanic, from the Latin word for "Spain," has the broader reference, potentially encompassing all Spanish-speaking peoples in both hemispheres and emphasizing the common denominator of language among communities that sometimes have little else in common. Latino—which in Spanish means "Latin" but which as an English word is probably a shortening of the Spanish word *latinoamericano*—refers more exclusively to persons or communities of Latin American origin. Of the two, only Hispanic can be used in referring to Spain and its history and culture; a native of Spain residing in the United States is a Hispanic, not a Latino... In practice, however, this distinction is of little significance when referring to residents of the United States, most of whom are of Latin American origin and can theoretically be called by either word. A more important distinction concerns the sociopolitical rift that has opened between Latino and Hispanic in American usage. For a certain segment of the Spanish-speaking population, Latino is a term of ethnic pride and Hispanic a label that borders on the offensive. According to this view, Hispanic lacks the authenticity and cultural resonance of Latino, with its Spanish sound and its ability to show the feminine form Latina when used of women. Furthermore, Hispanic—the term used by the U.S. Census Bureau and other government agencies—is said to bear the stamp of an Anglo establishment far removed from the concerns of the Spanish-speaking community. While these views are strongly held by some, they are by no means universal, and the division in usage seems as related to geography as it is to politics, with Latino widely preferred in California and Hispanic the more usual term in Florida and Texas. Even in these regions, however, usage is often mixed, and it is not uncommon to find both terms used by the same writer or speaker. Chicano is used only of Mexican Americans, not of Mexicans living in Mexico. It was originally an informal term in English (as in Spanish), and the spelling of the first recorded instance in an American publication followed the Spanish custom of lowercasing nouns of national or ethnic origin. However, the literary and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s among Mexican Americans established Chicano as a term of ethnic pride, and it is properly written today with a capital. While Chicano is a term of pride for many Mexican Americans, it remains a word with strong political associations. Since these politics are not necessarily espoused by all Mexican Americans, and since usage and acceptance of this word can vary from one region to another, an outsider who is unfamiliar with his or her audience may do well to use Mexican American instead.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 19:07

QT Thots

Matt 12:43-45 Jesus said, 'When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting-place, but it finds none. Then it says, "I will return to my house from which I came." I am thankful for those experiences of deliverance, in which some dark thought or feeling leaves my mind or heart. Phewww, good riddance. Thank you, Jesus! I enjoy having a mind or heart that is swept and in order- the way its supposed to be. To my dismay, the Dark Powers can, and do, return. And are worse than ever. Why? Why didn't the deliverance last? Why am I defeated again by more of the old dark thoughts and feelings? When it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first. Because my swept out and now orderly mind is "empty". To move on, to grow beyond, we

Blog Export: DUTCH TREAT- Cal Fox's Blog, <http://www.calvinfox.com/blog/>

must replace the negative stuff- and do that with its opposite: love in place of hate, faith in place of fear, pro-action instead of re-action and, yes, constructive thoughts in place of the destructive. I must do this replacement, unless I want to end up more troubled than I was before I had my "victory in Jesus".

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 08:21

Thursday, July 14. 2005

Sick Hospitals

There is a lot of controversy in Massachusetts over a bill about to be voted on by our Legislature mandating nurse-to-patient ratios in our hospitals. Nurses generally seem to be in favor, while administrators and doctors seem to be opposed. It is confusing. It is not clear who is meant by "nurse". I have not read anything about the work of various "Assistants" or even LPNs who, in my experience, do a lot of the work that the debaters claim RNs do; or about the large amount of time that RNs seem to spend doing administrative duties, rather than direct patient care. I did read another article this week about the thousands of patients who get infections every year in hospitals from poor care from somebody (not clear). I often hear staff on all levels complain about being over-worked and under-paid and about battles between them and Administration and about poor management. As a patient, I know what it is to wait an inordinate amount of time for some one to answer the bell and be told, "Sorry, we are short tonight." And have you been in an ER lately? Something's wrong. Hospitals are sick.

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 08:58

Cooking under Fire

We watched the last two back-to-back episodes of the reality show, Cooking Under Fire, last night. The best cook lost because she did not have the attitude the judges were looking for. She was too nice, too humble. The winner was an arrogant, abrasive, "in your face" person, even though they all agreed her cooking was not the best. Her type personality is what the judges said was required to survive as a chef in a New York City restaurant. That's what they wanted. So the contest was not about cooking. The food prepared was delicate and tender, works of art. The chef chosen was just the opposite.

Posted by Cal at 08:40

Wednesday, July 13, 2005

Muslim Murderer

It seems clear that the bombers in London last week were Muslims. The president of the local mosque, concerned about backlash, had said in a letter to our paper's editor, that they were not Muslims. Murder is against the principles of the Koran and Muslims are peace loving people like every one else.

Today's paper has the confession of the murderer of a Dutch film maker last November. He is a Muslim who explains his action by saying, "What moved me to do what I did was purely my faith...I was motivated by the law [in the Koran] that commands me to cut off the head of anyone who insults Allah and his prophet." The filmmaker's latest movie was critical of the treatment of women under Islam.

Also in today's paper was an article about the latest bombing of Protestants by Catholics in Northern Ireland. They, of course, all claim to be Christians. And then there were the Baptists who demonstrated recently during the funeral of a soldier here in Massachusetts, saying that he died because God has cursed America because of its toleration of homosexuality. (The soldier was not homosexual)

The reality is that every religion has extremists who use their religion in an attempt legitimize their evil actions. It is also reality to recognize that these evil doers are evil, no matter what religion they profess. That religion does not legitimize them.

Posted by Cal at 17:15

Hispanics

Trying to get a handle on this topic of multiculturalism is daunting. I write often about cultural diversity and that may seem a remote, even irrelevant, topic to some of you. The reality is that the urban world is a multi-ethnic world. While there are only 6000 Hispanics in the entire State of Vermont, there are 10 times that many in the Springfield area where we live and a total of 1.2 million in New England.

Definition is a problem (as always). People from Spain, although speaking Spanish, are not Hispanic or Puerto Rican. They are Spanish and Puerto Ricans are not, although that is what the latter are often called here. We know folks from Mexico who do not like to be called Hispanic and do not want to be confused with Puerto Ricans. They are Mexican. The same is true of people from Cuba.

Puerto Rican people can have very dark skin color and can be confused with African Americans. Some Puerto Ricans are very light skinned and seem to be White. Meanwhile, people who come here from Africa do not want to identify with African Americans, nor do people from the Caribbean, even though many of them may have very dark skin color. ("Africans" are actually from nations in central Africa and not from North or South Africa)

The writer of our daily paper's column, La Vida Latina, says in today's article, that the way to relate to Latinos is by the heart. She encourages businesses who want to reach the Latin market to show emotion (nationally, half all new consumers are Hispanic. The Latino TV viewership is a \$700 billion market) "We are emotional. Move a Latino by showing respect for the language, family, heritage and the community."

All of this kind of information is important for Christians and churches seeking to effectively communicate Christ cross-culturally.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 16:54

Rational Discrimination

Often what is called racial discrimination is really rational discrimination. The latter is genuine discrimination based, not on ethnicity (or "race"), but on measurable behavior of a group. It is done by businesses for business purposes. Automobile and Life insurance rates and mortgage lending, for example, are based on rational discrimination- based on statistics for a group, measuring risk factors. Often decisions, made on this basis, are not fair to individuals in the group, whose behavior is not typical of the group. We want individuals to be treated on their own merit. A good illustration of rational discrimination is an Ordinance soon to be enacted at a local Mall. The group discriminated against are youth under 18. As a group, they are known to regularly hang out and fool around at Malls. That is the case, anyway, at this particular Mall, one of the largest in New England. This group behavior intimidates many adults and interferes with or even prevents them from shopping, i.e. - spending money at the Mall. Hence, the business decision to restrict them from visiting the Mall on weekends after 4pm if unaccompanied by an adult. In some towns, there are ordinances restricting teens from driving alone after designated hours, as a safety precaution, based on measurable driving behavior of teen drivers as a group. In both cases, this discrimination is unfair to individual teens who are responsible and mature, who deport themselves well in malls and while driving. But, the Ordinances make sense statistically. They are rational, i.e.- reasonable. We may insist that such policies, directed at groups and being unfair to individuals, are flat out wrong. If we do so, we must not insist on policies that favor groups we belong to when that is to our advantage, even if it is unfair to individuals who are not members. We can not have it both ways.

Posted by Cal at 13:05

Extreme Diversity

In reading about how churches approach the subject of diversity, most writers (Pastors) seem to come to the conclusion that a homogeneous Service [rather than "blended"] still works best. Churches still want to practice diversity. A common way to do this is for one church (one staff, one membership and one budget, under one constitution) to have several different homogeneous Services. I came across North Coast Church in California, which offers 15 Services each weekend. Each Service offers a totally different ambiance and style to meet the needs of people from different cultures. More than 5400 people attend. The logistics involved are mind-boggling. So is the idea that this can still be one church! [by the way, this one church belongs to the EFC of A] <http://www.northcoastchurch.com/about.htm>

Posted by Cal at 10:52

Tuesday, July 12, 2005

Thinking Biblically about Business

I continue to be impressed with this website and its practical, Biblical principles for the workplace and business. I recommend it.<http://www.christianitytoday.com/workplace/articles/whatbusinessworldview.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:35

Monday, July 11. 2005

More on Peacemaking

from notes written in February 1993-What God did as a peacemaker was to remove barriers that divide: Eph 2:13 (ESV)...in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility 15 by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, 16 and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. 17 And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. This gives us a model for peacemaking. Peacemakers are those who remove any barrier that may exist between themselves and others, thus making reconciliation possible.

If the barrier is Christ or right living it can not be removed. If the barrier is a wrong perpetrated upon us, that can be absorbed. What debts are owed us may be cancelled. This is forgiveness. Our anger toward our enemies can be loosed. That is non-retaliation. Our hate can be replaced by doing good to them. That is love. Thus, obstacles in us that separate us from others, our enemies, are removed. In this way we have made peace with them, even if they have not made peace with us.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:37

Peace Making?

I have heard several passionate and well-meaning talks lately in which it has been said that Jesus calls his disciples (and everyone else) to be "peace makers". It seems that there is some confusion in defining the concept, but it usually comes out meaning Jesus wants everyone to work toward reconciling enemies [whoever they are] and/or to practice non-violence [non-retaliation] when being assaulted. Such talks are primarily based on the Beatitude, "Blessed are the peace makers." The "command" to work toward reconciliation and/or to practice non-violence is applied to individual Christians, to the Church, and to America and, ultimately, to everyone.

First, it should be noted that the Beatitude is not a command, but a description. It should be noted that the description is of disciples and of no one else, let alone the government. There is no command to anyone to be peacemakers as defined. What is commanded is discipleship. That is what the topic should be, not peace-making. To my mind, speakers on this topic of peace making usually have a weak (if any) theology of evil and especially of fallen human nature. They are usually Arminian and have a far more optimistic view of people, saved and unsaved, than what I believe Scripture warrants. Furthermore, they usually have nothing to say about the role of civil government and its God-given responsibility to serve Him by maintaining law and order in a corrupt society (ironically called "keeping the peace") When this topic of civil government is addressed, to my mind, the plain teaching of Scripture is explained away. This, I believe, is connected to their view of human nature and evil. I started wrestling with this issue when I was a teenager, as a new Christian. It was my first big test-confronted by the need to sign up for the Draft at 18, I decided that, as a disciple of Jesus, I must register as a Conscientious Objector. That was denied me as I was not a member of a Peace Church, like the Quakers. I was granted a clergy deferment, since I was planning on entering the Ministry. I kept my pacifist convictions private in the ensuing years. The ideal still appeals to me, but my views have changed. In 1976, I put together notes for a Course on Discipleship. I here summarize from them-What Jesus does command is "Follow me!" Jesus calls believers in him to become his disciples. This means to imitate and follow the way Jesus lived, i.e.- a. to be a servant b. to love, particularly to lay down our lives on behalf of others c. to passively accept any hardship that comes because of doing right. Further study deepened my understanding of what Jesus meant by "discipleship"- 1. he wanted the men he chose to be with him, travel with him, be his companions. 2. to share his fate, particularly to be crucified and then, to be

glorified More than anything, the mark of a disciple is sharing the cross of Jesus. The cross of Jesus has two basic meanings: First, the death of Jesus on the cross was a ransom for sin, a substitutionary atonement. This is the orthodox interpretation of the death of Jesus- it comes from Jesus himself. By it, sinners and God are reconciled. Jesus' death was a propitiation: it placated the Wrath of God because it was an expiation. It removed the reason for that Wrath. Thus God was reconciled to Humankind. This is how Jesus was a Peacemaker- a Reconciler. Evangelism is spreading that good news and exhorting people to respond and become reconciled to God. This is how we can, in fact, be peacemakers- Reconcilers. Second, the cross was the occasion of Jesus' victory over Satan and Evil. This is also very Biblical, but has not been as popular a doctrine as the first. By obeying God the Father, Jesus came into conflict with the Powers of Evil, especially as manifest in the State and in the Religious Leadership of his day. He voluntarily submitted to their wrath. His innocent suffering for obeying God defeated Satan. "The conquered conquered". It is to sharing in this second meaning of the cross that disciples are called. Discipleship is following Jesus. That, as Paul develops the concept, is to imitate Jesus. That means one thing: obey God as Jesus did and pay the price for doing that as Jesus did. Obeying God, living by Kingdom Principles, will in itself, work much good in society. But more: obeying God will bring us into conflict with Evil ("If they hate me, they will hate you"- Jesus) Our calling is, should that happen, to submit to the consequent suffering. That is carrying our cross. Doing this will rout Satan. He has been defeated by Jesus, but still is active. He is conquered in our lives and in society, when disciples do not retaliate while being persecuted for the stands they take in obedience to God. When they practice personal non-violence in those circumstances, absorbing their losses, forgiving the trespasses of others against them, the forces of Evil are overcome. You can call that peacemaking. And it is a command. To do this peace making, to practice non-retaliation in these circumstances and to forgive our enemies is humanly impossible. Only those individuals who are indwelt and filled by the Spirit of Christ can possibly live this way. And they must.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:08

QT Thots

Psalm 15 Lord, who may dwell in your tabernacle? who may abide upon your holy hill? What does this mean? If it is about Heaven (Salvation), the answer is "Whoever comes to saving faith in Christ." But that is not the answer written here. The question is a literal one- "Who will be allowed into the Temple to enjoy the presence and blessing of the Lord- now, in this world?" To that question the answer is- Whoever leads a blameless life and does what is right, who speaks the truth from his heart. There is no guile upon his tongue; he does no evil to his friend; he does not heap contempt upon his neighbour. In his sight the wicked is rejected, but he honours those who fear the Lord. He has sworn to do no wrong and does not take back his word. He does not give his money in hope of gain, nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. We are used to thinking that "whosoever will may come": that the only expectation God has of those who would worship is that they approach Him through faith in Christ. Not according to this Psalm. The experience of God's presence and blessing on our lives requires practical personal holiness on our part. As this truth sinks in, I am convicted of my sin and driven to the cross for mercy, forgiveness and God's grace to amend my life accordingly. I want that experience. Whoever does these things shall never be overthrown.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 08:46

Sunday, July 10, 2005

Going to a Wake and to Worship

I mentioned earlier that a neighbor has passed away. We are about to leave to go the Wake. Protestants don't normally use that term. We prefer The Viewing or Calling Hours. We think "Wake" is too Catholic. Actually, it simply refers to the days of old when bodies were on display, at home, where they could be viewed during "calling hours". The word "wake" referred to the custom of someone staying awake, with the body, watching through the night- a vigil. Of course, we are now down to 2-4 hours of "viewing" at a Funeral Home. I have not heard of anyone keeping the all night vigil anymore. Then we will go to Nehemiah House for an evening worship service with those who live there and their guests- Christian college students, who are there for the Summer, doing an "Urban Plunge". They are very intense, energetic young people who take discipleship very seriously. We find them a very challenging and enjoyable group to be with. It is refreshing and very rare to find Christians who are so passionate about serving the Lord and making a difference for Him in this world. You can check them out at <http://www.nehemiah-ministries.com/>

Posted by Cal at 16:50

Knowing who who we (Christians) are

What is our identity? How do we define ourselves? We are many things, in this order- 1. an animal 2. a human being 3. the image of God: a person 4. the image shattered: a person in Adam 5. the image of God restored: a person in Christ 6. a gender 7. member of a family 8. member of a nationality 9. member of an ethnic group 10. member of a culture 11. member of a subculture 12. member of an occupation 13. member of an avocation It is a very serious mistake to identify or define ourselves by singling out only one or two categories.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:24

Saturday, July 9, 2005

As Fido said, "So many trees, so little time"

I have stacks of books around me here in my Library Study. One has books about trends in current philosophy and theology, especially related to Post Modernism. Another stack has books analyzing contemporary society, especially about "Power". Another stack has the books I am reading about Racism and multiculturalism. And then there is the material I have been using to put together the 60 page syllabus of lecture notes for the course I plan to offer in the Fall: From Chaos to Civilization for Christ (studies in Genesis) And of course, there are the magazines and newspapers and all kinds of websites to check out regularly. I do not laugh while I work, like the ball players in the last post, but I do enjoy studying and writing and teaching. I hope you are enjoying your work, too.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 19:09

Having Fun

The WNBA All Star game was on this afternoon. Some 9000 fans in the arena watched some of the best professional basketball players, anywhere, play a great game- over 220 points scored. What made it extra enjoyable was that the women thoroughly enjoyed themselves. They were smiling and laughing, while playing, most all the game. Never saw anything like it. It was nice.

Posted by Cal at 18:53

Be prepared

Our 75 year old next door neighbor was sitting in their living room with his wife, three nights ago. He turned to her, smiled and passed away.

Posted by Cal at 18:47

Parents beware!

We checked out the local museums yesterday. We entered the Science Museum and immediately were confronted with material on the walls presenting the story of "Human Evolution". This theme continues in the next room, which takes us to Africa. Here we have displays which introduce us to what could be considered as Afrocentrism, as well as the New Age concepts of Gaia and panentheism. And then on to the planetarium, where we marvel at the wonders of the Universe and learn more about the origins of Creation without a Creator. I wonder if the typical Christian parent is aware of the challenges to their Faith that their children find in such an "educational" outing. There were hundreds of Summer grade school kids wending their way through the exhibits. Is the typical Christian parent up to the challenge and able to intelligently respond to it?

Posted by Cal at 08:55

QT Thots

Sometimes I hear Christians say God will never allow tragedy to strike them or, at least, they act very shocked when painful times come and, sometimes, turn from God with bitterness because something terrible has happened to them. The reality is that sometimes, in His good will for us(Psalm 60) You have made your people know hardship; you have given us wine that makes us stagger.One reason, God may do this is to drive us to our knees- (Psalm 63) O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a barren and dry land where there is no water;Certainly, this is what we must do if we are to get through. But there is more:I have found that, when I am

Blog Export: DUTCH TREAT- Cal Fox's Blog, <http://www.calvinfox.com/blog/>

under attack by dark thoughts and feelings or by evil forces, the best defense is an offense. I begin first with praise and then I go on the attack, using the Word against the Enemy (like Jesus did in his wilderness)(Psalm 149) Let the praises of God be in their throat and a two-edged sword in their hand;(<http://www.oremus.org/oremus.cgi?f>)

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 08:30

Thursday, July 7, 2005

Tony Blair and Multiculturalism

Today, responding to the terrorists attacks in London, PM Tony Blair stoutly protested against the barbarians who had attacked civilization. If we follow the rules of multiculturalism, Mr Blair was terribly insensitive. No one should laud his culture over another. None are superior. None are inferior. All are equal and deserve equal respect. Mr Blair was flat out saying that the terrorists are barbarians and uncivilized. That is a judgement. It shows prejudice. The terrorists have a right to their values as well as the British. By those values, apparently it is the Brits who are barbaric and it is life in London that is uncivilized. Of course this is nonsense. I agree with Mr Blair. Multiculturalism is foolishness. However, there is one problem: how does anyone decide who is right or wrong? What criteria can be used to judge good or bad? what is barbaric or civilized? What standards are the G8 protestors using? The very fact people argue about "Justice" means that there is such a thing. How do people know that? How do we measure it? If there are no universal principles to determine these matters for everyone, all civilization will, indeed, become barbaric or certainly as mangled and unrecognizable as that two-decker London bus that was blown up today.

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 18:35

"A Passion for Chairs" ? !

I just came back from lunch. All morning the news has been about the terrorist attacks in London and about the G8 meeting in Scotland where the agenda is about important major issues such as world poverty, aids and global warming. In today's mail was the current issue of Your Church magazine, with the lead story being "A Passion for Chairs". Apparently, a lot of churches are having controversy over what kind of seating to have in their new mega auditoriums: traditional pews, padded single chairs or, the latest thing- plush theater seats. Do you see any problem with this? In the context of today's news, I think this demonstrates well the irrelevancy of a lot of churches in today's world. The ship is sinking and not only are people rearranging the furniture, they are arguing about replacing it with something more comfortable. Lord, have mercy.

Posted by Cal at 13:00

Tuesday, July 5, 2005

QT Thots

Isaiah 2:3-5 Come, let us go up to the mountain of God, to the house of the God of Jacob; We seek to be faithful and go to church every Sunday. We go to offer sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving. (We hope the music and prayer time will enable us to do that meaningfully.) We go because we expect that the law shall go out from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. We expect to hear the Word of God preached effectively. We do this so that God may teach us his ways, and that we may walk in his paths. We want to learn the ways of the Lord, so we can live as He wants us to. Yesterday's July Fourth seemed to have a military theme. Fly-overs, uniformed bands playing, troops marching. We rightly appreciate all who have died to preserve and protect our Country. We heard alot about Freedom and our right to "life, liberty and [particularly] the pursuit of happiness". But, soldiers have not sacrificed for us to be a society sated with self-indulgence. The Nation was not birthed in blood for us to be a people of perversity. God shall judge between the nations, and shall mediate for many peoples. They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. The States of American were meant to be united "under God", under His Law, that we are learning in His House every Sunday. Then we shall be independent, not from King George, but from our Enemies in spiritual places. Then, only then, our world will be free at last from hate, fear, violence and war. O people of Jacob, come: let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 09:19

Monday, July 4, 2005

A Rockwell Fourth

My wife, her sister and I spent the day on the Common of a rural village in Northeast Connecticut. Everything about it was picture perfect ala Norman Rockwell. The Church on the green organizes this Jamboree every year. It was life as I remember it- families, lots of small children, maybe 3-400 people, all very peaceful and relaxed in the sun under blue skies. Lots of food: Chicken BBQ and real homemade strawberry shortcake, as well as the usual hotdogs and hamburgers. Children singing on the bandstand. A local instrumental band played traditional music. No smoking or cussing. Very clean fun. Biggest draw was the frog-jumping contest. Parade went around the Common twice, mostly children on decorated bikes, antique cars and fire engines from the local volunteer Fire Station. Very nostalgic, patriotic, heart-warming experience. It was all so Yankee and traditional. It was also so totally middle class White. How does that village, that world of bygone yesteryear, co-exist with this noisy, hustling multi racial, multi cultural world, back here in Springfield? Which is the future? Whatever you did today, and where ever you did it, I hope you not only enjoyed it, as we did, but that you also offered a prayer of thanks to God for this Country and all who have sacrificed to make it possible.

Posted by Cal at 19:50

Friday, July 1, 2005

QT Thots

Heavenly Father, I recoiled at reading of the anguish of David just now (in Psalm 38). He loves you and serves you, but he is struggling and suffering so- in every way. I am thankful I do not feel like him this morning. Have mercy on all who do. Come to their rescue, deliver them and heal them in their bodies and souls. Thank you, Lord. My heart goes out to David as he mourns the loss in battle of his dear friend, Jonathan. He is beside himself with grief. (2 Sam 1) And my thoughts go to the families of the 16 friends and loved ones, whose bodies were recovered yesterday from the helicopter shot down in Afghanistan. Three times David says "How the mighty have fallen". This weekend is a major holiday, with people making great plans for fun- I'm thinking about those troops and those who love them. Today's reading (from Song of Solomon) says that love is stronger than death and nothing can quench it. These men volunteered to fight and are now fallen, while the rest of us enjoy our blood bought freedom to play. Lord have mercy on their families who love them. grant them peace. Help the rest of us to remember and honor their sacrifice this weekend. Amen

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 07:59