

Tuesday, February 28, 2006

Faith in the Workplace

A website that I continue to find helpful is Faith in the Workplace. It has this advice today-Any work done well is done for the glory of God. "Sell cars and soap with excellence," we told him. "Simple integrity glorifies God, too!"As you go about your business this week, honor God in everything you do.This is excellent advice on the surface of it. Certainly, sloppy and shoddy work of any kind does not honor God. And we certainly do admonish Christians to consider what they do everyday to be for the Lord- whatever the "job" might be.But, what if the Lord does not want you to sell cars or soap but has totally different work for you to do? I talked with some one earlier today who turned down a worthwhile position because it was not "him". What if you are gifted to be a salesperson, but your product is cheap or defective. Doing a great job selling a piece of junk will not honor God. What if the product is fine, really nice; but, the company itself treats its employees poorly or is involved in some illegal or unfair business practices? Doing a great job selling a good product for such a company will not honor God.The original website advice (above) is still good, but not enough.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 17:53

A Purse and a Sow

"Can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear", the saying goes. The Good Samaritan used the money in his purse for ministry- to care for the man he found in the gutter. The Prodigal Son used his money on "riotous living" [maybe he went to New Orleans for Marti Gras] and ended up in the gutter with a sow.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 11:27

Only a Story?

The Preacher at the church we attended Sunday, delivered well a well crafted message about the Transfiguration. He said this Scripture is a story. "Stories" are very big these days among many Preachers. I have used them, of course, over 45 years of preaching. Every Pastor I know has always used stories. There is a difference today. We used them as illustrations of objective truths. Today, stories are more often used as containing the truth. The story does not illustrate truth external to it, but rather communicates truth within it. This is, "illustrated" (sorry) by what the Preacher said, Sunday, about the Transfiguration. It does not matter whether it ever happened or not. The actual story may not be true (historical) . Catch that- this Scripture may not be true. It does not have to be true. When we read it, we may find truth in it. He then explained what he thought the truth for us today might possibly be. At this point, he added another notion, also very popular among today's emerging church leaders. The story, that may not be true, came out of a community of believers. Apostolic authorship is irrelevant. It is to be discussed among us today, as a community of believers, to discover some truth in it for us (So much for "revelation" of objective, propositional truth and the writer's original intent, let alone traditional Rules of Interpretation) But hey, this Message was well crafted and well delivered.

Posted by Cal in Church at 10:49

Far More than Bye-Bye to Bon Bons

Tomorrow is Ash Wednesday, the beginning of a period set aside each year for special self-reflection and repentance [that word means changing mind and direction] in preparation for Holy Week. For some, Lent seems to have to do with giving up some pleasure. This is, in turn, the rationale for an overindulgence in pleasure today. The church we visited last Sunday invited folks to attend a presentation about Fasting-- to be offered immediately following a sumptuous "Coffee Hour". When I went through a tough time 30 years ago, my help came from the Lord through an old 1928 Episcopal Book of Common Prayer that I found in a used bookstore. It gave me the words to pray when I couldn't come up with any on my own. Very good words that helped a lot. During that period, I took to spending time in Roman Catholic churches. The sense of sacred space was very conducive to prayer and reflection. Particularly, I was drawn to meditate on the suffering of a young, 33 year old, man. I connected to him and his suffering in a new way. From that time, I have valued a crucifix. I have some of them, here in my study. Occasionally, I have been ridiculed or even

chided, by evangelical Protestants for these "Catholic" things. We believe in the resurrected Christ, they say. Of course. Absolutely! That is Easter ("Resurrection Sunday")Don't we evangelical Christians also believe in the Blood of Jesus. Didn't many of us flock to watch his flogging, in the movie called Passion of the Christ, ("Passion" means "suffering".) Don't we testify that we believe he suffered and died for our sins? Don't we, with Paul, preach Christ crucified? Don't we admonish sinners to repent and turn to the Suffering One? And did he not admonish us to pick up our cross and follow him? Are we not to be crucified with Christ?Well, all of that is Lent and Holy Week!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:23

Monday, February 27, 2006

QT Thots

This Hymn, by George Herbert (1643), teaches great wisdom. I have adapted it somewhat- Teach me, my God and King, in all things thee to see, and what I do, in anything, to do it as for thee. A man that looks on glass, on it may stay his eye; or if he pleaseth, through it pass, and then [seeing beyond or behind the glass] heaven espy....nothing can be so mean [ugly or lowly], which with this tincture [polish] [i.e.- this attitude:] "for thy sake," will not grow bright and clean. A servant with this clause ["for thy sake"] makes drudgery divine: who sweeps a room, [for Jesus] makes that [room] and the action [of sweeping] fine. This [attitude and motive] is the famous stone that turneth all to gold; for that which God doth touch and own cannot for less be [s]old.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 08:48

Friday, February 24, 2006

QT Thots

2 Corinthians 2:12-17 When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; You'd think this was a good thing: an open door to preach the Gospel. That is what an Evangelist lives for, and yet Paul literally walks away from it. Is it ever right to walk away from opportunities? Is an opportunity the same thing as a divine calling? That is an important question. Many would insist that an open door is from God and does, indeed, show us what He wants us to do next: go through it! But Paul does not. but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said farewell to them and went on to Macedonia. He turns down an opportunity because of his gut feelings, his emotions. He moves on to something else because his mind could not rest. Surprising! He says his restlessness was due to concerns about his co-worker, Titus. Titus had gone to Corinth with a letter from Paul about problems there. Paul had hoped to see Titus in Troas and learn the outcome of his Corinthian trip. He was worried about both his friend and the church in that city. Very worried. He confesses to "fear within" (See 7:5) Paul was preoccupied with that and thus could not focus on the opportunity in front of him. His fears had to be resolved, peace restored, before he could go on through any new door. When Paul finally meets up with Titus, he receives good news about the man and his mission to Corinth. This news brings great comfort and joy to Paul (See chap 7) Having his fears allayed, he is able to get back to work....thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. The mental, emotional and physical strain of being an Apostle has been overwhelming. Paul asks, Who is sufficient for these things? The answer comes in the next chapter, where he answers his question, our sufficiency is from God (3:4) May the Lord enable us to apply the lessons in this story to ourselves today. Amen

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 09:32

Thursday, February 23, 2006

The Cultural Mandate

Taken from lecture notes from the Course I teach on Genesis-GE 1:27 God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Man is given dominion over all other creatures and the earth itself- 1:26, 28 1:26 let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 28 fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." RULE = RADAH [RAW DAW] = dominate, subjugate, prevail against, tread down SUBDUE = KABASH [KAW BASH] = dominate, subdue, eg- Numbers 32:29, Josh 18:1, 1 Chron 22:18"Man" is to exercise authority and control over all other creatures and the earth. In chapter 2, the earth becomes a particular garden and "Man" becomes a particular couple (Adam & Eve). Adam and Eve are to work, cultivate [AW BAD], take care of, guard, protect [SHAW MAR] the Garden - 2:15, 4:9Some interpret 1:28 in light of 2:15. In that case, the universal command in 1:28, "Rule & Subdue, means "Cultivate & Care for" all Creation. The command to rule & subdue applies to the whole earth. The command in 2:15 to Work & Keep (cultivate & care) applies to the Garden of Eden, which no longer exists. A better interpretation combines the two commands: Humanity is to rule & subdue the earth and turn it into a garden [ie, make it fertile and productive] to be cultivated and cared for.

THE STEWARDSHIP (CULTURAL) MANDATE God is the Creator-Owner of the Land (Psalm 24:1, Job 41:11) As His representative, i.e.- as His Image, Man is God's Steward [lieu-tenant]. He is responsible to make Creation productive for humanity while maintaining its well-being. Starting with what God "finished", human beings are to apply their God-given creative minds and abilities to continue His work of making order out of chaos, giving form and content to the earth. This is the primary expectation God has of all people. This is our primary purpose in living. It requires rationality and creativity (invention) and will involve Culture, Cities and Civilization. It will involve the Economic Goals and Methods described elsewhere on this Blog. There are three Great Mandates and they answer three Great World View Questions-1. What are we here for? Stewardship: Cultivating Creation into Civilization 2. Why should we do this? Love for God and Neighbor 3. How are we to go about getting it done? Making Disciples: Teaching peoples from all Nations to obey the Lord

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 15:07

Does the Church Need a Revolution?

There has been a lot of discussion in response to a book by George Barna, entitled "Revolution", about the state of the church in America today. <http://www.crosswalk.com/faith/pastors/1378676.html> My views are expressed in the lengthy, spiritual autobiographical sketch that follows. It was helpful to me personally to put thoughts into words. It may be of interest to a few of you. It explains where I have been and where I am going, in case you want to know :-). Some of you reading this are part of the story...I became a disciple of Jesus when I was 17 years old. I had grown up in church and Sunday School and was always interested in the life of Jesus. His life and teaching had a great attraction to me. From my earliest years, I have always been very serious about living as a Christian. I tried to imitate Jesus or do what I imagined he would do in my circumstances. Besides my mother, a children's book, "The King Nobody Wanted" and Bruce Barton's book, "The Man Nobody Knows", were major influences. I think the WWJD craze was inspired by the latter. At least, that was the question the book sought to answer. The Sermon on the Mount was the key and it led me to register as a Conscientious Objector when I turned 18. They had the draft back then.

Following my moment of commitment to Jesus himself (not simply to imitating him) for the rest of my life, I became involved in a Word of Life Bible study group for teens in our high school and in the church where its sponsors were active. Thus my earliest formation as a "born again" teenager was in a Fundamental Baptist Church. Among other things, I adopted Scofield Dispensationalism and the passion of my life was "soul winning"- personal evangelism. I did a lot of that along with becoming an Evangelist, preaching at youth rallies, jails, rescue missions, camps, public parks and churches. When my faith came under attack during freshman year at a "secular" college, I made the second most important commitment: By faith, I accepted the Bible as the inerrant, infallible Word of God. I would base my life on it. My true "major" in college was evangelism. I was very active in Inter Varsity Christian Fellowship and at 20, during my Junior year, became the interim Pastor of a Baptist church close to the campus. During my Senior year, I was on staff

as the Youth Pastor of my home church, where, eventually I would be ordained. My first full-time Pastorate was in an inner city Fundamental Baptist Church. Evangelism was still the thrust of my ministry, as well as world wide missions. We had many missionaries visit our home and speak in the church. They, too, were soul-winning Fundamentalist Christians. Most were church planters, some were educators or medical missionaries. All were seeking to win the Hell-bound Lost to Christ for personal salvation. That was the Sixties. Our country was in great turmoil. It was a time of social upheaval, riots, violence and assassinations and war. We were not involved in any of that. We were too busy winning people to Christ, ministering one-on-one and building up the local church. It eventually relocated in new facilities and has since become a large, influential contemporary evangelical "Community" church, losing its fundamental Baptist, evangelistic and traditional missions heritage. So was I, in many ways. I had become restless with the church as I knew it. I hungered for a more dynamic, New Testament, Book of Acts Spirit-filled church. I immersed (good word to use as a Baptist) myself in researching just what that might be. Studying the New Testament and church history led me into what is called the Restoration Movement. It claimed to be all I was seeking. So off we went, with our children in tow, to a Seminary in the mid-West, affiliated with that Movement. I was in the MA (N.T.) program. I immediately got into preaching Revivals and Rallies and Pulpit Supply. Soon I was helping a group of Believers start a New Testament Church in neighboring State. We relocated and I commuted to School. Eventually, I was full-time with the Church and we moved from the office building we were holding meetings in to our first building. That church, too, has gone on to be a large, growing congregation. I realized, after 4 years, that I, too, had to move on. The Restoration Churches really, it turns out, were not much different in practice than the Baptist churches I knew. I concluded the attempt to restore the primitive Church of the First Century is a chimera, not only impossible, but wrong-headed to try. There were, and are, a lot of solid, good Christians in the Baptist and Restoration churches we have known. My growing dissatisfaction was not with them individually, but with the organized churches as such. I had this growing awareness they were not as Christ intended. They very much reflected common, middle-class, conservative American social, economic and political core values. We had, concurrently, become increasingly involved with ministering to students at a nearby College. My growing personal burden was to engage the issues of our society and culture with the Mind of Christ, i.e.- Scripturally. Typical Church members do not do that. They have a Savior and seek his blessing and help on the lives they chose to live according to their common, middle-class, conservative American social, economic and political core values. Period. Not acceptable to me at all. My hope was to engage the minds and hearts of college students, helping them to engage in the issues of our times as Christians. They in turn would become change agents for Christ in our world upon graduating. Some did, and have done, just that. In my judgment, the typical church was not going to do this. I gave up expecting it to. We relocated in New England and began working full-time, by faith, with college students here. It was a wonderful time for several years. This was in the early 70's. However, the realization came that students had to spend most of their time and energy on their regular studies and, upon graduating, had to choose careers to pay debts and get on with their lives that would become like their parents and elders, lived according to common, middle-class, conservative American social, economic and political core values. (The only real difference, for some, was less conservative and far more liberal) I gave the pastorate another shot. It was a terrible time. I went back to my enthusiastic, evangelistic style in what essentially was a mainline and very typical New England church. Many came to Christ. Old time Leaders did not like the changes. I had a melt-down and left to go back to working with students. We actually were into "community", having students living with us in a big enough house. We enjoyed doing Bible studies and worship with students. During both periods in that town, some came to Christ and learned to think Christianly, Biblically, and have served the Lord well to this very day. I did a lot of writing and I am still using some of that material in my work now, 30 years later. During these last 3 decades, I have preached and taught in a variety of churches. I have tried planting another local church, was interim at two and the full-time Pastor at another. I have definitely given the local church a lot of years and effort. Much good, in individual lives, came from that; but I am more dissatisfied with it than ever. No matter what the official Vision and Mission Statements say, churches are still doing business as usual and members are still living life as they chose, according to common, middle-class, conservative American social, economic and political core values. (only now, even less conservative and far more liberal than 30 years ago) Does the church need a revolution? No. I have had enough seminars and workshops about planting and growing healthy churches. I do not want to read any more books on that subject or about developing Leaders or about communicating or being authentic and relevant to today's world. What is needed is far more basic: not a revolution of the church; but, re-formation of the Gospel preached in churches. I said earlier that I began my Christian life with a focus on the Man, Jesus, and the Gospels (primarily Matthew, Mark and Luke). Then I was into Dispensationalism, Evangelism and Missions. That was an emphasis on Paul and the Epistles (as we they were known then). Then came a focus on Acts and the Holy Spirit-filled life and church. I had started out as a Calvinist, experimented with Arminianism, and returned, stronger than ever, to being a Calvinist- better, Reformed. Dispensationalism had been replaced, years ago, by Covenant Theology. As a Pastor, I was mostly functioning as a core evangelical for pastoral purposes. My theological and intellectual life had to take a back seat to the demands of being a solo working Pastor, involved in building up a church; as well as doing things like weddings, funerals, visitation, counseling and youth work. Along the way, I had found meaning and help in Anglican [Reformed] spirituality and practice, especially frequent Communion (as Sacrament). Anglicanism also led me to a renewed focus on a whole God: the Triune God of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I also came back to a focus on the whole Bible, not only the New Testament or a portion of it. The biggest change for me, however, has come from understanding the Gospel in light of Genesis and the Cultural Mandate. This is the

Re-formation of the Gospel that is needed and what has been missing all these years. Many start the Gospel with Romans: all have sinned; and go from there. Lately, I hear more people saying the Gospel must start with Creation and then go to the Fall and Redemption. This is a big improvement and is due to a new influence of Neo-or Dutch Calvinism. It does not go far enough. Before the Fall and after the fact of Creation, God delivered the "Cultural Mandate". You may hear a few evangelicals mention this, but when they do they usually interpret the Mandate to mean it is imperative for Christians to wage a culture war on topics like abortion and gay marriage. No, that is not what the Cultural Mandate is about. Many Evangelicals believe that the priority of the Church is the Great Commission, no matter how evangelism and missions is understood. Others, believe that the Great Commandment, understood as ministries of compassion or social activism, to be the most important concern we have. Some will try to combine the two, usually seeing the latter to be an adjunct or bridge to the former. No, again. There are three Great Mandates given by God: The Cultural Mandate, the Love Mandate and the Make Disciples Mandate. All three together. I know very few churches, none locally, that grasp this. The order of the day is not renewing churches. The order of the day is recovering these 3 Mandates and the Gospel that goes with them. Doing that will be a true Revolution. And it is what I am now all about.

Posted by Cal in Church at 14:39

Wednesday, February 22, 2006

Interpreting the Law of God

Admittedly, a major difficulty with the use of the Law is determining which laws apply to what people and when. Laws that are historically conditioned, ie-Laws that apply to the internal affairs of a particular nation at a particular time in its history, may, arguably, not apply to any other. We start with Laws that are universal, those that pre-date the Nation of Israel, Decalogue and the entire Mosaic Law. Commands or Laws found in Genesis 1-3, given to "Man" (not limited specifically Adam and Eve), would have universal application, eg- the Law about Marriage, as well as the Cultural Mandate. We next consider the Mosaic Law, especially the Decalogue, as our source of God-given, universal laws. The Law of God commands that parents be honored, there must be fidelity in marriage, children must obey their parents, property not be stolen, witnesses in court must speak the truth, people must be paid wages for their labor and the wages must be fair, no one must be murdered or raped, the land must not be destroyed, animals must not be abused, widows and orphans must be cared for by their extended family. These Laws are not ceremonial or historically specific civil laws.

Principles of the Law When we teach that Christians must follow the Law of God, as His Directive for our daily lives, we often mean the Principles (values, morals, ethics) derived from the Law. (We look at many examples in my Course) We affirm completely that sinners are saved by grace and not by obeying the Law. But- the Law of God, properly interpreted, teaches us how to live, both by its original intent and by applying the principles involved. 1. Christians seek to obey those Biblical Commands and Principles that have universal and timeless application. Biblical Commands that apply only to a specific time, people or place are not authoritative to Christians today, eg- the command not to eat of the forbidden fruit in the middle of the Garden of Eden was given only to Adam & Eve and for when they lived there. 2. Biblical commands that apply to marriage, family, property, work, money, care of the poor, care of animals and the environment, criminal justice and government are universal and authoritative today. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys the Law of God in all such matters. 3. The principles and their applications must be in honest harmony with the original intent. eg- the principle that Believers should not marry unbelievers must not be used to teach against inter-racial marriage 4. Application of Law and Principles must be in harmony with the teaching of Jesus and his Apostles (the New Testament) 5. Application should be made in light of the Tradition [and Counsel] of the Historic Church

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 08:28

My Kingdom Vision

What was the theme of all Jesus' sermons? The Kingdom of God. It has two meanings. There is the dynamic Reign in which God the Spirit is present and moving in the hearts and lives and affairs of people. There is the objective Realm. Jesus preached about both Reign and Realm. The Realm over which God reigns is human society organized and running according to God's intentions and norms. That includes: · All education grounded in Christ and His Word · The Sciences and Technology serving God · The Fine Arts and Pop Culture pleasing to Him · Marriages and Families functioning by God-given principles · Nature and the Environment managed and used as God intended, at its Creation. · Businesses (the entire economic endeavor) organized around Biblical principles This is the Kingdom Vision that dominates my heart and mind. This is not a secular vision. This is not a Plan for the world to follow. It won't. It can't. The world hates God and will not submit to Him or His Law. We are not seeking to bring in this Realm via governments or coercion of any kind. "Not by might, but my Spirit, says the Lord". -Zechariah 4:6 The Scripture makes it clear that this Kingdom on earth will never be fully realized until the Second Advent of Christ. The Vision is not about Christians making it happen. We are not seeking to make America, or any other Nation, Christian. I am concerned about how Christians live: about making Christians Christian. God's Nation (The Church) will demonstrate God's Law by living it in their lives. That means they must first learn it. They will also give public (verbal) witness to it. For example, they will promote and advocate God-given economic Principles, the Ultimate economic Goals and Methods to achieve them [see yesterday's post], in whatever country they happen to live, regardless of the outcome or effect such a witness may have. The Realm absolutely requires the Rule. The Rule must precede the Realm. The Realm is only possible in the lives of regenerated Believers living in a Covenant relationship with Christ,

through the power of the Holy Spirit. These Believers are the only Nation who can organize and live this way. That is the Vision: the people of God around the world, living under the Law of God, in the midst of, and opposed by, other nations who worship false gods. They will be Light in the Dark, the one Nation through which God will bless all others, as He promised in His Covenant with Abraham, millennia ago.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:05

Tuesday, February 21, 2006

AN OUTLINE OF BIBLICAL ECONOMIC PRINCIPLES

The following are some notes from a Course I have been teaching -Economics: "a social science concerned chiefly with description and analysis of the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services"
Merriam-Webster Economics is about the choices people make with regard to scarce resources – People choose to sacrifice some things in order to obtain other things because there is a scarcity of those things and nothing scarce is free (every scarce thing has a price). Economics is about the exchanges people make of things [time, possessions, money, etc] desired less, for things [time, possessions, money, etc] desired more. These choices and exchanges are affected by values and incentives. They should also be determined by long-range (rather than immediate) consequences. The Bible does not have a detailed blueprint for any particular Economic System, e.g.- Capitalism or Socialism. What it does have in abundance are moral and ethical principles that are very relevant to economic topics. These Biblical principles provide the values that guide economic choices and behavior.

The Four Biblical Principles are Stewardship, Sharing, Work, Growth These principles are to guide the economic decisions about what to produce, for whom and how, when and where to distribute product (goods and services) THE BASICS : the Ultimate Goals of Economics. These goals shall be achieved! The Earth is for Life, especially human life [Think One Race] [Think Global] Growth: global population and its needs are expected to continually increase; therefore, so must production [God has promised that resources will not be scarce] Sharing of natural resources with all ---all are to have enough. No monopolizing for private greed or gain (individuals, corporations, nations) Work: everyone (male and female) around the globe must have a part and do their part in the economic process More Biblical Basics- Basic Methods of achieving Economic Goals "Private Property" [understood as private responsibility] Working that property [capital] to make wealth Workers respected and treated properly [as Humans- in the Image of God] Accumulating that wealth for investment to make more wealth Trade (voluntary distribution) by Supply and Demand These together are the normative, essential, way to fulfill the Cultural Mandate: Preserving cultivating and developing natural resources (the eco-system, the environment), in order to sustain an ever growing Humanity, is the ultimate Economic Goal and God's unchanging will. Developing cities, culture and civilization will be essential to the economic process.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 19:07

What is the difference between Christians in higher education and Christian higher education?

Reading this speech [greatly abridged here] prompted my comments, printed in italics I can talk knowledgeably about Christians in higher education since I am one. Christians in higher education, at secular schools, can be placed in two different bins or categories. I'm not happy with the terms, but I'll call one group the "privatizers" and the other, the "evangelicals." Privatizers in higher education view their faith as disconnected from their work as professors. They are involved in a local church (often heavily involved); ... But these professors, the privatizers, are not identified at their schools as Christians; These professors live in two worlds, not simultaneously, but sequentially: one is secular; that's the campus; the other is sacred; that's their church. The second kind of Christian professor in higher education I'll call the evangelical. The professors, researchers, and scholars in higher education I have labeled the evangelicals believe that the quest for truth begins and ends with Jesus. Their work involves teaching and research in their disciplines... their calling entails extending the reign of Jesus into all realms. But, we shall see below, this does not include teaching and, in the writer's case, the field of Economics!

These professors can be found giving talks to the campus chapter of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, or Campus Crusade for Christ; or the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, or a dozen other parachurch organizations on their campuses... leading a Bible study in their office with students or other faculty... having office hour conversations about the Christian faith, as well as office hour conversations about sociology and microbiology... praying for the spread of the

gospel on their campuses. But ...you will not find these professors teaching their courses from a "Christian perspective." While they are Christians in higher education, their institutional environment is not one of Christian higher education. Evangelical professors may be quite visible as Christians at their secular colleges and universities. But they operate under the constraint that, fundamentally, they have been hired by their institutions to teach and do research in a particular discipline or subject matter, So these are two versions of Christians in higher education:...one Christian professor sees his faith as largely irrelevant to his job. For the other, her job is fully under the Lordship of Jesus as a calling. How can the writer say this? If his teaching is under the Lordship of Jesus, doesn't it have to be taught from a Christian perspective? Christian higher education should be radically different. ... integrating the Christian faith with one's discipline. It is not easy to do. ...to take the Bible's great themes ...and weave them into classroom discourse. But what is the alternative, if integrating the Christian faith and the Bible's great themes are not woven into classroom discourse? To my mind, this is the great distinctive between Christian higher education and Christians in higher education. The classrooms and laboratories and seminar rooms of Christian higher education are places where faculty and students are free to explore topics that are, to some extent, off-limits to Christians at secular universities, or simply irrelevant to the academic discourse at secular schools. Does this mean that this Teacher believes Christian doctrine is off limits or irrelevant to the study of Economics (his field)? How can the writer believe in a Christian education and then continue offering one that is not? His answer seems to be that just being on campus and available to witness to students out side of class is reason enough. I have a problem with that answer. No field of knowledge is neutral. Every field (including Economics) involves presuppositions and values. If the latter are not grounded in God and His Word, they are not neutral, rather they are against God and His Word. This is the Doctrine of Antithesis. The full text of this speech by an evangelical professor at a "secular" university can be found at <http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2005/09/30/elzinga>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:13

Should a Roman Catholic teach at a Protestant College?

Wheaton College (Ill) recently terminated one of its professors because he became a Roman Catholic. As such, he could not, in the College's opinion, subscribe to the school's Statement of Faith. This professor has since joined the faculty of a RC college and, apparently, has no problem with what Wheaton did. He knew it would happen and he respects the school's right to do it. In fact, he respects that they were trying to remain faithful to their Heritage as a strong evangelical Protestant school. OK, but wow, the flack Wheaton is taking over this from the public. Comments from critics of the school reveal more about the state of today's common contemporary anti-theological, a-historical and subjective brand of Christianity. "Why can't we just all love each other. We are all Christians, why be dogmatic or doctrinaire?- that only divides us." Particularly, the the people disturbed by all this reveal a serious ignorance of the differences between Reformation Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Wheaton has not said Roman Catholics are not Christians. It has said that they are not Protestants. I have gotten into trouble over this myself. The difference matters. A good explanation of the differences at stake in the controversy have been spelled out by the President of Wheaton. Study, especially, his second statement here-<http://www.wheaton.edu/welcome/response011006.html>

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 14:43

Seeking the Seekers

"Earlier this year, the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute released its study on college students' spiritual needs. As the project co-directors Alexander and Helen Astin noted in the study, "the relative amount of attention that colleges and universities devote to the 'exterior' and 'interior' aspects of students lives has gotten out of balance ... we have increasingly come to neglect the student's inner development — the spheres of values and beliefs, emotional maturity, spirituality and self-understanding." In their study, the Astins quantified for American higher education something that faculty members teaching at Christian colleges have known and experienced all along — students are looking for deeper meaning and purpose in their lives, and they are not finding much help on many of our nation's campuses. Seventy-six percent of respondents (110,000 college and university first-year students) drawn from more than 230 campuses indicated that the search for meaning and purpose in life was important or very important to them. In similar numbers, they expressed a belief in God, a somewhat regular prayer life and frequent conversations with friends or family about matters of faith and/or spirituality. Sadly, on most college and university campuses today, few faculty are engaging students in this deeper work of meaning and purpose in life — what we might call the larger vocational questions that students are asking." <http://www.insidehighered.com/workplace/2006/02/01/mahurin> This is a significant finding. It offers great encouragement to Christians seeking to minister to students on "secular" campuses. It also defines what being a "seeker" involves. Some of us disparage "Seeker sensitive" church services as wrong-headed because Scripture tells us no one seeks God (Rom 3:11). While this is true, it is also true, documented by this study, that the search for meaning and purpose in life was important or very important to young people. If we insist that

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

Worship Services are exactly that, for those who know the name of God, then it remains to offer Truth about the meaning and purpose of life to those seeking that, in some other venue,

Posted by Cal in Church at 10:50

Monday, February 20, 2006

Band aid is a bandaid, or worse

We can help the homeless here in Springfield by sending a donation to the local rescue mission- enough for a meal at their annual Easter Dinner. We can collect underwear for them, as one church did yesterday on "Undie Sunday". These are specific acts of kindness and they do offer some immediate, practical help. We could contribute to national Funds Collections to make Hunger History, as advocated by rock bands and celebrities. We could, on an even bigger scale, support the effort of celebrities to persuade our federal government to give 1% of our national budget to governments in Africa, for poverty relief. Our newspaper tells more about the 11.5 million people who are starving to death today, in East Africa. The article quotes several relief workers and experts who say that periodic drought itself is not the problem- it is manageable and does not need to lead to hunger or starvation. What is needed is money to be spent on electricity, water and irrigation, roads and transportation. This will enable local farmers to succeed in producing, selling and buying food. They can then support themselves. They do not need or want grain or boxes of food stuffs from the West. Billions of dollars worth of relief are sent, in periods of crisis, to save starving people, by well meaning and well fed people, NGOs and governments. That is the Easter Dinner, underwear collection, bandaid approach. It helps for the moment, but hinders and harms in the long run. The crisis passes and the cycle goes on until the next crisis.

What is needed most is help for the long term: long range, systemic planning and private investment to help local farmers get what they need to develop their own industry and trade- not government checks to American farmers to grow and ship crops to Africa, and definitely not money given directly to African governments without serious strings attached to prevent the corruption that is so prevalent on that Continent. (not to mention ineptitude, waste and fraud on this one). Granted, it is a complex issue. There is no easy fix, but the fix will ultimately be found in economic development and free trade, not government to government aid. Long term, systemic planning and policies and actions that will enable and equip people in need to become self supporting is what Christians must be engaged in as part of the Cultural Mandate given to us by the Creator. Here are some helpful websites-<http://www.ratzingerfanclub.com/blog/2005/07/debt-relief-trade-reform-and-one.html><http://www.acton.org/blog/index.html?archives/196-Bono-Aid-or-Trade.html>

http://www.nationalreview.com/nrof_bartlett/bartlett060302.asp

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 13:22

Olympic Honesty

In spite of the hype that the Olympics is all about sports, not politics, a lot is made of national rivalries between competing teams in all the Olympic events. The media coverage emphasizes each country's medal count. What about the increasing reality that these "patriotic" athletes live and train in countries (mostly the USA) other than the one they officially represent? The charade about patriotism should stop. The hype about 'sports not politics' should cease. Athletes should compete as athletes. They should be supported by people who like them as athletes, regardless of their national or ethnic origins. Period. Or, the Olympic promotion should be honest: it is about nations competing with each other. In this case, the athletes on each country's teams should not only be citizens, but, in fact, live and train in the Country they represent.

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 11:21

QT Thots

Ephesians 1:3-10 Blessed are you, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for you have blest us in Christ Jesus with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. This passage starts on a very happy note: "Blessed"= worthy of worship; "blest"= made deeply happy and "blessing"= gift. Being "in Christ" is a good place to be! Whatever our lot today, we are "rich" and have every resource we need for what is coming. You chose us to be yours in Christ before the foundation of the world, In Christ, we belong to God. He Himself chose us long before we were born. But our election was not simply for salvation in Eternity, but that we should be holy and blameless before [Him]. In love [He]- this phrase

can, grammatically, go with the words before it or with the words following it: we should be "holy and blameless in love". Or- "God destined us, in love, for adoption". Both uses of the phrase teach us important truths. "In love" tells us what we should be blameless in. If not love, what else? "In love" also tells us that God's adoption of us was personal and motivated by love for us. God destined us for adoption as [His] children, through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of your will, to the praise of your glorious grace, which you freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. Grace, unmerited favor, was freely bestowed on us. The next verse says that this unmerited favor was richly lavished upon us. And this was while we were yet sinners, not only after we became His chosen children. God is generous in His goodness and mercy. He is our model: unlimited, unconditional love for sinners. In you, we have redemption through the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of your grace, which you have lavished upon us. Redemption is many things. At its core is one thing: the forgiveness of sins. We cheat sinners when we tell them only that God loves them and wants to give them purpose and peace. The first thing sinners need, and that God offers, is forgiveness of sins. This brings us back to the top of the text: most blessed is the sinner who's sins have been forgiven. That is the first blessing in Christ. For that we worship and bless God.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 10:37

Sunday, February 19, 2006

Got Teens?

This seems like a very good website for information that will help to understand and relate to Teens today <http://www.cpyu.org/>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:09

E Pluribus Unum

The juxtaposition of two articles on the front page of the second section of today's paper is a story in itself. At the top is a story "Latinos chart areas of concern". There was a meeting of Latino Leaders in our neighboring city of Holyoke with people from a "Latino think tank" from Boston to plan strategy for the next State elections. Half of Holyoke's population is Hispanic. It is the most poor city in the State. Top of the list of concerns is the highest teen pregnancy rate in the State and the highest school drop-out rate. The headline below "Latinos..." is one that reads, "Grand Colleen chosen at ball". It features a photo of 5 pretty Irish young ladies from Holyoke. It is part of the annual St Patrick's Day Celebration coming up. Same City, different worlds. Latinos in the area have their own Celebrations. African Americans do also. So do the Greeks and Italians and the Polish. And we just had Chinese New Year. All of this makes for an interesting, even vital, City; but it also makes for division and rivalry and detrimental competition. To save Springfield-Holyoke, all these differences must be set aside, or at least kept in perspective, with everyone pulling together for the benefit of all. E Pluribus Unum

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:22

After Church come the Comics

I read the "Sunday Comics", but to call them that is a misnomer. The strips I follow are really true to life stories or stories that have true to life themes or observations. Limited to the ones that our local paper carries, I recommend Charlie Brown, For Better or Worse, Dilbert, Funky Winkerbean, Crankshaft, Adam, Doonesbury, Family Circus, Shoe, Zits, Tiger, Rose is a Rose, Hi & Lois, and Drabble. For Better or Worse, Funky Winkerbean, Crankshaft and Doonesbury are the ones that carry an on-going story line. All of these 'toons can be very insightful into the "human condition" and worth reading.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 14:47

Forgiven, but accountable

Psalm 99:8 "...you were a God who forgave them, yet punished them for their evil deeds." To be forgiven is a wonderful thing; but, it does not excuse us from the consequences of our sinful acts. The Piper must always be paid.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 14:22

Call to Worship- Confession of Faith

Psalm 99 The Lord is king; let the people tremble; he is enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth shake. The Lord is great in Zion; he is high above all peoples. Let them confess his name, which is great and awesome; he is the Holy One. 'O mighty King, lover of justice... Proclaim the greatness of the Lord our God and fall down before his footstool; he is the Holy One. 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; Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place, that I might behold your power and your glory. For your loving-kindness is better than life itself; my lips shall give you praise. So will I bless you as long as I live and lift up my hands in your name. My soul is content, as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips... For you have been my helper, and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice. My soul clings to you; your right hand holds me fast.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:23

Prayer of Thanksgiving from the BCP

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks for all your goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all whom you have made. We bless you for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for your immeasurable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies, that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up our selves to your service, and by walking before you in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory throughout all ages.

Amen.<http://www.missionstclare.com/english/February/morning/19m.html>

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:13

Saturday, February 18, 2006

Think Again: Islamist Terrorism

Here is a significant and scary article from FOREIGN POLICY January 2006 about Islamic Terrorism- (these are excerpts)Think Again: Islamist Terrorism "Poverty, Unemployment, and Lack of Education Make Terrorists" Prove itPoverty, unemployment, and lack of education are serious problems in some of the world's most populous Muslim countries. There is, however, no evidence of a correlation between these social and economic ills and terrorism. Terrorist groups, like other employers, impose standards of quality in their recruitment efforts. Research shows that terrorists tend to be of "higher quality"—more educated or accomplished in other jobs and pursuits. "Young, Unmarried Muslim Males Are the Most Likely to Become Terrorists" No. "Madrasas Are Terrorist Factories" That's an exaggeration. "People Support Terrorism Because They Are Poor and Lack Opportunity" Doubtful. "Perceived Threats to Islam Create Support for Terrorism" Absolutely. In some countries, including Indonesia, Jordan, Lebanon, Nigeria, Pakistan, and more than 70 percent of the population believes that Islam is under threat. Support for terrorism feeds on the belief that large segments of the Muslim world are victims of ongoing injustice. Some experts argue, with justification, that the perception of threats to Islam is deliberately cultivated by Islamist political groups and authoritarian Muslim governments to generate support for their agenda. But support for terrorism is unlikely to decline without addressing that perception, whether the perception is the product of propaganda or the result of legitimate political grievance. "Fixing the Israel-Palestinian Problem Will Make Terrorism Go Away" Hardly. Radical Islamists want nothing less than the restoration of Islamic sovereignty to all lands where Muslims were once ascendant, including Bulgaria, Cyprus, Ethiopia, Hungary, Sicily, Spain, and even parts of France. "Disenchanted, Angry Muslims in Europe and North America Are Potential Terrorist Recruits" Increasingly. C. Christine Fair is a senior research associate at the United States Institute of Peace. Husain Haqqani is a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and teaches international relations at Boston University.http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3359&page=0

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 19:09

Friday, February 17, 2006

How Many Races are There?

The post before this one (below) reminded us a lot of rural French Quebec. This morning I had routine blood work done for a check up next week. The medical building we went to was packed. Most of the other people there were either African-American or Hispanic, with Spanish being the language most dominant. No French. The same scene is replicated in our PC doctor's office- actually, most everywhere we go here. This is not the White world we grew up in, nor the one we came from in Vermont. It is scary and uncomfortable, as well as exciting and interesting. Like it or not, it is the world we live in- a multi-ethnic, multi-"racial" America. I put quotes around "racial" because, Scripturally, there is only one Race: Human -Acts 17:26

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:40

Inspiring Film about a Man and 13 Children

We watched a documentary today that was very interesting and touching. It is a French language film entitled "To Be and To Have" about a teacher and his 13 students, 3-10, in a very rural, one room school (covering the year 2002) This man, finishing his 20th year, is marvelous. The filmmaker has captured a very special relationship between students and teacher and among themselves as young children. It is about being human, as well as about the teaching-learning process. Inspiring.http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/to_be_and_to_have/

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:16

QT Thots

1 Corinthians 11:27-34Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. Answerable for the crucifixion of Jesus? I thought he died voluntarily for the sins of the world? "Answerable" here is a bad thing: it seems to mean responsible, personally guilty, for causing the death of Jesus. To partake of The Communion in an unworthy manner is the same as killing Jesus? How could this be? Well, if we add Heb 6:6 and 10:29 into this Meditation, the answer is that the sin in question is not the actual murder of Jesus past, but the desecration of that Sacrifice present. We are talking here of the sin of blasphemy or sacrilege, committed by partaking of Communion in an unworthy manner.Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. Some churches serve Communion to very young children. This text tells us why that is not a good idea. Whoever partakes must be at least of an age and ability to understand what the Supper is about and whether they are approaching it in a worthy manner. If someone is not able to do this, they should not be given the Elements. For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgment against themselves. This text lays to rest the Baptist idea that the Lord's Supper is merely a memorial and that the Loaf and Cup are only (empty) symbols. If that were the case, how could eating and drinking in an unworthy manner be a sin and bring condemnation? At the very least, the elements are more than what is passed around in the tray or plate. Somehow, they are "the Body and Blood of the Lord".For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. The condemnation or judgment is not in eternity, it is now. This text tells us that physical ailments may be caused by misuse of the Supper. At the very least, no one, whatever their age or background, should participate in it lightly. It really is "Holy" Communion. Beware.So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. What could possibly be the terrible sin meant by the phrase, "Unworthy manner" or "not discerning the body"? Now we arrive at it-The answer comes from the larger context of today's passage- the earlier part of this chapter, as well as this last verse. It is the same sin being committed by the Christians in James 2:1-18 Check it out!

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 12:14

Thursday, February 16, 2006

Fear Not

The father of two of our granddaughters' classmates passed way unexpectedly last week. He apparently was overcome by carbon monoxide while working on his snow blower in his closed garage. He was 44 and leaves his wife and 3 sons, one of whom was away at college. This is very reminiscent of what happened with a friend of ours in Vermont two years ago. I have posted thoughts about Alan elsewhere. He was about the same age when he too was suddenly called home and also left a wife and 3 children, all about the same ages. In both cases, words intended to comfort have come pouring in. On the Funeral Home website, letter after letter is posted with words of love and support for Bob Wood's family. On the website of the Christian School where the Woods were very active, there is a heartfelt letter written by the Head Master. The messages are all faith filled. The primary focus is on the comfort that comes from knowing that a loved one is not "dead" but has gone on to be with the Lord, more alive than ever. That is a blessed assurance for Christians. It almost goes without saying, but it is always a comfort to hear again. It also does not deal directly with the feelings of those left behind with a great hole in their hearts and lives. Here words fail us. Time does not help. To say time heals is not telling the true. Only the Lord can fill that aching abyss. He will do it directly by His Spirit within and through words of Scripture and Hymns and through the actions of others who are in our circle of friends--and often through the missing loved one himself- through the memories and momentos he has left behind that speak of him to those who have ears to hear. The most blessed assurance is that we who are left behind will not be facing this or the future- so many things to change, to do- alone. God truly is Immanuel: with us through it all and He is faithful and will supply our every need. That is a most comforting assurance. We can face tomorrow knowing who holds tomorrow. We do not need to fear- for our selves, for our children. Another comfort follows from that: if God shall be with us, guiding and providing, He must have been with us on the day the "tragedy" happened, too. The common temptation in moments like this, is to be angry and to cry out, not only "How...?" but also "Why...?"

If we are to trust in God's love and providence for tomorrow- that He is in control of what shall happen- then we must also have the confidence, by faith grounded in His Word, that He has been in control up to now. What happened to Bob Wood and the entire Wood Family, somehow, is in God's Plan for them. With eyes filled with tears, it is difficult to see this. That is why we need to see this hard and comforting Truth before the trials and tears come into our lives. Through the years, I have been with couples when their babies have passed away, their teen agers have died in car accidents, fathers have committed suicide or had fatal heart attacks. I have funeralized many who have died from disease or simply old age. When we come into the world, we all have an expiration date written somewhere. We do not, and should not, know what the date is. We should know that it is definite and will come and thus we should prepare for it. That includes making the most of what unknown time remains, before the date arrives. We must not allow fear of the unknown ruin what is known. We can not change the past. We can not allow fear of the future spoil a perfectly good present. Actually, everyone lives the same length of time: forever. Our ultimate choices are how we will live in this world and where we shall live in the next one. If we truly trust God to be in control, working in all things to fulfill His perfect will in our lives, we shall not be afraid!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:35

Is Discrimination ever appropriate?

There is a very interesting interactive website. Using it takes the viewer through a number of scenarios that will increase awareness of different types of discrimination in our society, along with possible courses of action to take in response. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5439480/?r=6> What does the Bible say about discrimination? Many verses clearly state that God shows no favoritism. His People are commanded to treat everyone equally. More exactly, Discrimination based on ethnicity (Jew vs Gentile) or based on social/economic (rich vs poor) is a sin. However, God is a Judge. He Himself does discriminate. Therefore, we can not say that all discrimination is wrong. God's discrimination is based on behavior, both of individuals and of groups. Neither ethnicity nor social/economic status excuses bad behavior. [Note: "bad behavior" is behavior God deems unacceptable, using His moral and ethical standards] Jews and Gentiles, Rich and Poor are all accountable for their personal and group behavior. Discrimination based on behavior is both appropriate and necessary and applies to everyone, equally, regardless of ethnicity or social/economic status. This is a very brief summary. I can supply the Bible verses.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 10:25

Mission to Maryland and Beyond

In 1696 Thomas Bray, an English country parson, was commissioned to report on the condition of the Church in the colony of Maryland. He spent only ten weeks in the colony, but he radically re-organized and renewed the Church there, providing for the instruction of children and the systematic examination of candidates for pastoral positions. He founded thirty-nine lending libraries and numerous schools. Both in Maryland and upon his return to England, he wrote and preached in defense of the rights of enslaved Africans, and of Indians deprived of their land. Back in England, he worked for the reform of prison conditions, and for the establishment of preaching missions to prisoners. He persuaded General Oglethorpe to found a American colony (Georgia) for the settlement of debtors as an alternative to debtors' prison. He founded a missionary society, the SPG (Society for the Propagation of the Gospel) and an educational and publishing society, the SPCK (Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge), both of which are still active today. [written by James Kiefer, found on Oremus]

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 09:43

Tuesday, February 14, 2006

Valentine's Day

Hope you had a sweet Valentines Day. A lady on the news just now said she grew up in Bulgaria and did not celebrate the day because St Valentine is a Catholic Saint and she is Orthodox. Actually, no one knows who "St Valentine" really was and at any rate, he has long since been removed from the RC list of true "Saints" along with "St Christopher". Then there is also the fact that the legend of "St Valentine" dates to the very early centuries (maybe 3rd or 4th) The Roman Catholic Church did not come into existence officially until 1057.

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Features/ValentinesDay/>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_SchismIt is all beside the point. The Day is about romance and lovers, promoted by the card, candy and flower industries. I hope you have romance and love in your life and were able to celebrate it today. Why not every day?PS- I realize that there are those who have neither romance nor a "lover" and this has not been a Special Day. I'd like to think such folks would wish the rest of us well anyway. I certainly hope that all of us, without exception, know we are loved- that there are people in our lives who do care for us and to whom we are special.

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 19:05

Monday, February 13, 2006

QT Thots

1 Corinthians 10:1-13I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors... were baptized ...and all ate the same spiritual food, and all ...drank from the spiritual rock ...and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. This text is a warning to us: amazingly, there are people who have been baptized and partake of the Lord's supper and yet still desire evil ...become idolaters ... indulge in sexual immorality... put Christ to the test, ...and complain ...These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, So if you think you are standing, secure in Christ because you have the Sacraments. Watch out that you do not fall. Do not take your salvation for granted. Yes, the Elect are eternally secure, but do not presume you are one of them because you have been baptized or take Communion [or said some "Sinners Prayer"] No testing [of your faith- to give it up] has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. All of us are tempted to fall into sin. Beware! Take heart: God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out if, of course, you chose to take it so that you may be able to endure it. The Elect shall endure. How do we know if we are among the Elect? By enduring.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 09:35

Sunday, February 12. 2006

Holding People Accountable

I have been dismayed to learn about the fraud perpetuated by victims of Katrina. Read the attached MSNBC article. I am also dismayed the article places the blame for this theft of millions of dollars from us, the tax payers, entirely upon FEMA. Why are the people who filed the fraudulent claims and cashed the checks not held accountable for their behavior? Slipshod accounting is very regrettable, but not a crime- fraud, theft, is.<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11278238/>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 19:24

Bonhoeffer

A book that was very influential in my Christian life is "The Cost of Discipleship" by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. We watched a very good documentary about his life and work this afternoon. He was executed by the Nazis for his part in a plot to execute Hitler. Bonhoeffer still has a lot to say to Christians today about incarnating the Gospel and speaking Truth to evil power, even to the point of martyrdom. Most of his Christian contemporaries in Germany did not agree with Bonhoeffer. Most of them supported Hitler and the Third Reich, believing that loyalty to God and Country demanded that. I suspect that many (most?) evangelical Christians in America today would do the same, inasmuch as those same values are deeply ingrained within us. Note: Ironically, most of us would also probably have been Loyalists, rather than "Patriots" during the Revolutionary War for the same reasons. We are, after all, Conservatives. In my formative years, every theologian in the documentary (Bonhoeffer, Barth, Niebuhr) was considered by Fundamentalists to be Modernist or Neo-Orthodox and thus all were dismissed. Note: In the 50 and 60s, "evangelicals" were new on the church scene. They were known then as "Neo-Evangelicals" and were also suspected to be Modernists. In all these cases, the major issue was the Doctrine of Scripture.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:04

Michelle Kwan

Michelle Kwan is a very classy lady and a professional who has brought great honor and credit to her sport and herself these last ten years. Due to injury, she had to withdraw from the Olympics. She did that with her characteristic grace. However, Michelle's 17 year old replacement, in the interviews I saw, showed no sympathy or respect for Michelle at all, only glee that she, Emily Hughes, was now in the games. What a pity.

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 18:28

Our God Snows

It was a beautiful Winter day- we had at least 18 inches. But, it meant that Church Services were cancelled. We stayed home. I tuned in to a Lutheran Church on the radio. The pipe organ music sounded great. The choir also had a nice sound, but what ever they were singing was impossible to understand. I would have preferred a Praise Team singing "Our God Reigns". To paraphrase Paul to the Corinthians: I would rather listen to 5 words sung that I can understand than 500 words sung that I can not. (That applies to all types of Christian music)

Posted by Cal in Church at 18:15

Saturday, February 11, 2006

What Gold is in your Wallet?

Philippians 3:7-21 Many days, I get very weary of this world. I enjoy time with my wife and family- but, the world? it makes me very, very weary. Every day, the news is a constant reminder of sins and sickness everywhere. The TV, movies and magazines are a constant suffocating surfeit of consumerism and materialism and lives of ungodly amusement, angst or ennui. There is tragedy and violence and injustice around the globe. All my life I have wanted to do something about all of that- make a difference. I have fervently believed that God, Christ, the Gospel and Church should be doing something about all of that and make a difference. I have worked hard at it. As I get older, I have this real sense that time is running out to do it. We all hear stories, during these Olympic Games, of young people who have dedicated and spent their lives to date, ten years or more, for one thing: to win Olympic gold. It is their magnificent obsession. The gold I am in training for is still ahead. The starter's pistol went off for my race 50 years ago. I'm still in the race, begun when I was 17...because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ...this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on towards the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.... whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss ... and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, I am still stubbornly committed to making a difference for Christ in this world, but that is less and less what I live for. Increasingly, as my time goes by I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. My advice to others? Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; Paul does not use the word "discipleship". Instead, he teaches the "imitation of Christ" and by that, he does not mean following the simple servant life style of the Nazarene Carpenter. Rather, imitating Christ means imitating Paul-Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. What is the opposite of this? Being an enemy of Christ. Beware- For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. Their end is destruction... The major characteristic of the enemies of Christ is that their minds are set on earthly things. But -our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He will transform the body of our humiliation so that it may be conformed to the body of his glory and that is the Gold Medal Paul and I are running hard to win. How about you?

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 14:43

Hymn Singing: Never leave Church without it!

We are planning on visiting a new church tomorrow. Those who know me, know how I love to sing hymns. It is usually the primary means by which I worship. For me to worship involves really getting into expressing my faith through meaningful, heart-felt singing. I will be really disappointed and frustrated and unhappy if I am denied the opportunity to sing tomorrow- the opportunity to worship when I am at church. It has happened often. I am spiritually disenfranchised when I am not able to participate in singing because I do not know the songs. After a life time of singing, I know hundreds of hymns by heart. More often than not, these days, I have never heard of the ones being sung, even though they are often introduced as "old favorites". (How can that be, if I have been singing in church more than 65 years and have never heard it before? I'm guessing they are old favorites to those who hear them often on CDs of contemporary songs, which I never listen to.) Being that only the words are put on the ubiquitous overhead screens, the arrangements are often spontaneous (as the Leader feels led) and the song is quickly followed by another and another- there is no opportunity to learn it, if I want to. Nor is any effort made to teach it to new comers like me. (Hymn books seem to be going the way of vinyl records and 8 track tapes. It used to be precious to watch parents point to the words and notes in hymnals shared with their young children during singing) Through the years I have learned many new songs and do enjoy singing them. I remember when "How great Thou art" was new. Actually, it is the translation of an old Swedish Hymn and became "new" when it was translated into English and was popularized by George Beverly Shea at Billy Graham Crusades. There are lessons in this. To become popular, the words had to be put into the language of those who would sing it. It had to be printed with notes so it could be read. It had to be heard and sung often, using the same melody and arrangements. The words and arrangements became traditional. If "How Great Thou Art" is announced tomorrow, that is what I expect and that is what I will greatly enjoy singing. I would hate to hear a R&B arrangement or someone trying a rap version. Think how many, many different renditions there are of "Amazing Grace" {or of the "Star Spangled Banner", for that matter] The latter raises another point. There is a major difference between music chosen for the benefit or pleasure of the Music Team and/or soloists and that chosen for congregational singing. There can be both kinds in the same Service, but they must not be confused in the minds of those who chose the music for the

Service. I will enjoy a beautifully song solo tomorrow in Church. I will enjoy, even more, worshipping the Lord by means of really good congregational singing of hymns (4-part harmony would make it even sweeter)

Posted by Cal in Church at 12:01

A Pink Panther in another Color?

If It Ain't Broke ... Movie Review by Mark Moring, Online Managing Editor/Music & FilmChristianityTodayMovies.com
"I've got nothing against Steve Martin. Like many others, I fell in love with the wild and crazy guy with his appearances on Saturday Night Live in the 1970s. I don't know why a man in an all-white suit playing a banjo with an arrow through his head was all that funny, but it was. Still is. And I like some of Steve Martin's movies, especially The Jerk, Father of the Bride, Roxanne, and Planes, Trains & Automobiles. Fun stuff. But now I'm afraid he's crossed the line: He's starring in The Pink Panther, opening nationwide this week. I'm sorry, but that role is taken—signed, sealed and delivered—by the inimitable Peter Sellers. The very thought of someone else playing the role is galling ... Martin should've politely passed on the gig. "No thanks," would've been the right answer, "but that role belongs to Peter Sellers. I'm not touching it." Some roles are simply not meant to be played by anyone else." This is how many of us feel about changes in traditional Worship Services. Some things to us are "signed, sealed and delivered"—On the other hand, the younger generation, that never saw Peter Sellers in the original Pink Panther movies, has no problem with a new actor in the role and the spin he puts on it. By the way, what was Saturday Night Live in the 1970s?

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 10:50

Friday, February 10, 2006

How about me too, U2?

I often hear that we older Christians need to learn how to communicate the Gospel to the younger generation. We must learn to speak their language, use whatever medium that they understand. Probably one of the rock groups most popular among younger Christians these days is U2 and its leader, Bono. His social activism is in the news a lot. He was the recent speaker at the President's Prayer Breakfast in Washington, DC. Certain Pastors I know think very highly of him. (Some of you reading this do also) They won a lot of awards at this week's Grammys. Dare I say it- U2 and Bono mean nothing to me. In an interview, I heard him say that he and his group do what they do because they believe in their songs. I have tried a few times to listen to those songs to see what I have been missing. If they want to communicate to me (and my generation) they must put the message of their songs into a medium that I can understand. They won't, of course. Seems like change has to be all one way. Older people or traditionalists must adapt to the younger, never vice versa. If Bono wants me to understand, let alone, believe in his songs, like he does, he must adapt them to a style of music that communicates his songs to me. (As I write this, by the way, Vivaldi is playing in the background) Of course, if he doesn't care whether I understand or believe, that is another matter. Question: If it is truth that the message and the medium are inseparable and the new medium is essential, doesn't that mean the old Message will be inevitably changed by the new medium?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:17

When is our work done?

I recently came across an organization that has a great track record for social activism, especially doing effective work with gangs and stopping inner city violence. Their approach seems sound and worth supporting to accomplish its purposes. See-<http://www.ncne.com/index.cfm> My question is: If gangs and youth-related violence are eradicated, indeed, if poverty itself is "made history", could we Christians be satisfied? Would our work be done? Why not?

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 12:40

Wealth: Bane or Blessing

The teaching about wealth, in the Bible, is multi-layered. On the one hand, God promises to bless His People who are obedient with wealth. Poverty, destitution, is not good. God will provide and enable us to make wealth. On the other hand, too much wealth is dangerous. It can be used for evil. It can corrupt our souls and ruin our lives on every level. God holds us accountable as stewards of the wealth He blesses us with. Wealth is meant to be used for ministry. He enables us to create wealth for His purposes, not ours.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:25

QT Thots

Psalm 130 Out of the depths have I called to you, O Lord; Lord, hear my voice let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication. The psalmist is "in the depths". The major theme of this psalm is forgiveness. The depth meant here is not depression or doubt and despair. It is a deep sense of guilt, before the Lord, about sin. If you, Lord, were to note what is done amiss, O Lord, who could stand? (Never ask God for what you deserve!) [but] there is forgiveness with you; very good news. Thank you, Lord. I used to resist the plea used in liturgical worship: "Lord have mercy, Christ, have mercy" because, I believe, our sins are forgiven in Christ, once for all. Why keep asking him for mercy, when we already have it once and for always? Well, by grace, we have been justified (forgiven and accepted). This position in Christ has been secure since the moment we came to saving faith. Hallelujah! But- our daily experience has us walk on paths muddied with sins and come Saturday night (at least) we need a bath of forgiveness. This Psalm is about that bath: our experience, not our position. therefore you shall be feared. This seems a strange thing to say- because God forgives, we fear Him? No. This is about the true meaning of "fear the Lord". Many people are afraid of the Lord, terrified, because of their sin and guilt before Him. But, we are not afraid of God for His anger. He has forgiven us. Therefore, for that very reason, we reverence (ie-fear) Him. We stand in awe of Him for His grace and mercy toward us. I wait for the

Lord; my soul waits for him; in his word [more specifically, in His Promises] is my hope. My soul waits for the Lord, more than the night-watch for the morning. Why am I still waiting on the Lord and hoping? for with the Lord there is [more] mercy; With him there is plenteous redemption "Plenteous" "Plenteous redemption"- ya gotta love that expression. The Lord has plenty more grace for me. I count on it.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 11:15

First Anniversary

This Blog has reached a milestone. I have been posting to it for one year today. There have been more than 3700 visits. There are innumerable Blogs on the internet. Many are forums for discussion. This Blog is not primarily about that. Comments are possible, but primarily, I interpret "Blog" to be a web log- a "log" in the sense of a journal of my thoughts about a variety of things. It could be a lot longer or more frequent. Usually, I write to simply clarify and summarize my own thoughts about something, for my own benefit; but, with the idea that maybe someone else might find them interesting and even helpful. If not, that is ok; but, I am pleased, to judge from the number of hits (about 75-80 most weeks) that some do. I appreciate my son-in-law, Norm, who has helped with technical details and without whom this Blog would not be here. I pray for this Blog- that it might be a blessing to others and not simply a form of self-expression for me personally. If you have been helped or encouraged by anything you have read here this past year, I am thankful. Let the new year begin...

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 10:02

Wednesday, February 8, 2006

A Call for a New Puritan Movement?

Joshua 7:1-13...the Israelites broke faith in regard to the [things that God hated and forbid]: ...and the anger of the Lord burned against the Israelites. [not aware of that] Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, ...So about three thousand of the people went up there; [and should have easily defeated the enemy, but] they fled before the men of Ai...Then Joshua tore his clothes, and fell to the ground on his face before the ark of the Lord Joshua said, 'Ah, Lord God! Why...?The Lord said to Joshua, 'Stand up! Why have you fallen upon your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I imposed on them. ...Therefore the Israelites are unable to stand before their enemies; ... I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the [things that I hate and have forbidden] from among you....We often bemoan the strength of the unrighteous surrounding the Church. Often the far greater danger is the unrighteousness within the Church. It must be dealt with first.

Posted by Cal in Church at 09:42

Monday, February 6, 2006

QT Thots

Two of today's Scripture readings (from Oremus) spoke to me-Psalm 110:1-5 This Psalm is commonly been understood as Messianic. The New Testament applies it to Jesus- He is a Priest forever. The Lord has sworn... 'You are a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.' This Priest is also a Prince with a scepter- Princely state has been yours from the day of your birth,... The Lord will send the sceptre of your power out of Zion Christ, Priest and Prince, has enemies. God promises Christ will rule over His enemies. They shall be His footstool. God Himself will see to it. The Lord said..., 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.' The Lord will send the sceptre of your power out of Zion, saying, 'Rule over your enemies round about you I was thinking this morning about those who have been my enemies through the years, including those in my last church. I believe I have forgiven them and hold no grudge. They have all been professing Christians, who sincerely believed they were right in their opposition of me as a Pastor (and ultimately, as a person) These are not good memories. There is still a lot of pain. I do not want to rule over them- or over anyone. Never did. I do pray that lessons have been learned all the way around, for everyone's benefit. But, if there is anything in them or in myself that makes us enemies of Christ, our Lord, I pray His sceptre will hold sway over it and we will lay it down at His footstool. Romans 8:2,14,15b-19... the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free ... All who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God; ... that enables us to cry, 'Abba, Father'.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 07:58

Sunday, February 5, 2006

What difference does Polity make?

There has been a recent controversy in a Presbyterian church in Tennessee. Leaders from the denomination stepped in and removed the Pastor and other Leaders. A friend said to me that he was glad for Presbyterian polity, giving concerned members someone outside the local church to call on for help. The "help" ended with the Pastor (some of whose books I use) being "defrocked" this week. I have no first hand knowledge of the case. I do not know for sure that the external authority (Presbytery, Moderator and General Assembly) did the right thing or not. From a life time of experience with churches of different kinds and with some knowledge of church history, I am convinced that the type of government (polity) is only as good as the people in it. Polity is a tool or instrument, a methodology, to facilitate the affairs of an organization. There are pros and cons to each type (congregational, episcopal and presbyterian) They all can be, and have been, used to support or facilitate evil. The mitre is only as good as the head that wears it. Far more important than polity, in preventing controversy that splits a church, is a genuine agreement by all members and leaders on the core values and vision of their church from day one. Personality conflicts and individual differences can be worked through where this fundamental unity exists. But this also, does not guarantee that sin, in the life of even only one member (especially if a person of influence), will not pervade and prevail in a local church. In that case, both polity and unity in core values will be irrelevant.

Posted by Cal in Church at 14:02

Saturday, February 4, 2006

The Contradictions of Black History Month

This time every year, there are many programs and speeches honoring Dr Martin Luther King Jr. He is rightly esteemed as a great civil rights leader. Yet one of the important themes he ardently espoused has been repudiated by many of the people praising him. Dr King preached racial equality. His vision for America was that one day it would be color-blind. People must not be judged by the color of their skin, he said, but by their character. TV host, Tony Brown, was the featured speaker here this week, beginning a series of activities celebrating Black History Month. He echoed Dr King, encouraging people to keep his Vision alive. The contradiction is simple: if the vision is for society to become color-blind, why have a month celebrating "Black" History, Black Heritage, Black culture. The fact is that many Civil Rights activists do not share Dr King's Vision. Within only a few years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965 and Fair Housing laws of 1968, many Black Leaders came to the conclusion that no real progress had been made. Racism, defined as believing that a group of people are genetically (racially) inferior to other groups, had been dealt a serious blow. However, discrimination and segregation, while now illegal, continued to exist. Instead of a color-blind policy, these activists began to advocate for special privilege based on skin color. The group, now known as African-Americans, were to receive preferred treatment, as a Minority group, in employment, college admissions and elsewhere- what amounted to "quota" systems, based on skin color alone. Their leaders had become convinced that "color-blind" really ends up maintaining the status quo of discrimination in favor of White people. Policies like Affirmative Action were necessary to level the uneven playing field. So much for honoring Dr King's Vision and principles.

I agree with Dr King- people must not be judged by the color of their skin, but by their character and that means, by their actions. This is Biblical. If we are honest and consistent, all policies that give preference to any group, based on skin color, are not Biblical and must be rejected. That includes Affirmative Action. The Biblical approach is to respect all people as human beings, created equally as the Image of God. Period. Individual human beings will not be equal (the same) intellectually and physically and in their gifts and talents, achievements, character, personal history and behavior (and of course, all of these variables change over a life time). Thus, they will not be "judged" or valued equally. The ideal is that each one will be treated fairly, equitably and on their own merits, not on the merits or history of any group to which they belong by birth.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 10:04

The Earth: learn to live with it.

Occasionally, an earthquake takes many lives and much property. Then follow the usual discussions about "Why?" "Why do these things happen?" "Why did God let this happen?" Same thing when it comes to other natural events like hurricanes and tornadoes. We human beings must realize that we are created. We live on a planet that God also created. We are part of the natural order created by God and must live our lives accordingly and not rail at that Order, as though we are exempt from the natural, built in realities of it. The air and water and processes like the Nitrogen Cycle are natural to our existence on this planet, so are earthquakes. Globally, there are an estimated half million quakes annually. The Earth: learn to live with it.

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 09:12

Worship Tomorrow

Hebrews 12:22-24a,28-29 About Acceptable Worship We have come before God... We have come before countless angels making festival, before the assembly of the firstborn citizens of heaven. We have come before God, who is judge of all, before the spirits of the just made perfect. We have come before Jesus, We are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken: so let us give thanks and offer to God acceptable worship, full of reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire. Tomorrow is the Lord's Day. Here we have the reason for Worship. And here we have acceptable worship described: it is to be full of reverence and awe; For some of us that could mean periods of silence and meditation and the entire Service conducted with dignity and proper decorum. But then, the very next Scripture, in my devotions today from Oremus, goes in a different direction Psalm 149 Alleluia! Sing to the Lord a new song; sing his praise in the congregation of the faithful. Let Israel rejoice in his maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their king. Let

them praise his name in the dance; let them sing praise to him with timbrel and harp. If worship is to be regulated by the mandates of Scripture (ie- only what is commanded is appropriate in Worship. Whatever is not mandated is not appropriate), then here we have warrant for joyous praise music accompanied by tambourine and harp (other Psalms add other string instruments, trumpets and cymbals) as well as dancing. I will not be watching the Grammy Awards next week- I do not like that kind of music. Actually, I seldom listen to any of today's Christian music. I prefer Bach and Vivaldi and Mozart, as well as quiet jazz. Occasionally, I'll get nostalgic and enjoy some of the popular music from the 50s, 60's and 70s. and the Big Bands from the 30s and 40s. Whatever the type and style of music, the essential point is to sing his praise in the congregation.... Let Israel rejoice in his maker; let the children of Zion be joyful in their king, while being full of reverence and awe and being very mindful that our God is a consuming fire. The latter is the real regulative principle.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 07:47

Friday, February 3, 2006

Being Kept by God

1 Peter 1:3-4, 18-21 Lord, it is a very dreary, rainy day. I have a miserable head cold. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Ah yes, I must focus on You- not the rain or my stuffy head. I must begin the day praising You, no matter my circumstances. By his great mercy we have been born anew to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The Resurrection of Jesus was impossible. Nothing is stronger than the grave- death has the last word. It can't be beat. Yet, Lord, the resurrection of Jesus is true- it happened. Your power is stronger than the grave. You have the last word. This means there is hope for me: hope to overcome my troubles, Hope for tomorrow, not despair. A lively hope: a living hope, a hope for my life into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled and unfading, kept in heaven for you. "Kept for me". Precious words. You are personally looking after my affairs. My future, my inheritance, is being kept by You for me! Who are being protected by the power of God. And I am being kept for you. Your rod chases away my enemies. The staff of your Word comforts me. Nothing can separate me from your electing, keeping love. Even my faith comes from You through faith for a salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. By your grace, I have faith that my Salvation, nothing less than complete, total Healing and Wholeness will come at the right time- your time. You were ransomed... not with perishable things like silver or gold; But with the precious blood of Christ... You have redeemed me, bought me, at the highest price: the precious blood of your Son. That means You won't desert me now. I am Yours and You are mine. Through him you have confidence in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. All this means, as I face this day, no matter what is coming- I have confidence You are in control. Yes, indeed, my faith and hope is firmly set on You, the God who is keeping me..

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 08:46

Thursday, February 2, 2006

Getting it Backwards

Isaiah 60.1-3,11a,18,19,14b Arise, shine out, for your light has come, the glory of the Lord is rising upon you. Though night still covers the earth, and darkness the peoples; Above you the Holy One arises, and above you God's glory appears....the Lord will be your everlasting light, your God will be your splendour. Churches, Christians generally, have it very backwards. Jesus and the Gospel are not about the needs of people. Jesus and the Gospel are about the needs of God. The miracles and exorcisms wrought by Jesus were not to help people, but were part of the battle Jesus was waging against the enemies of God. He was seeking to destroy those enemies, Satan and demons and evil powers entrenched in the structures of society, who had no part in God's world. When and where these dark forces are destroyed, people who suffer from them are delivered and healed. We see hurting, suffering people. We have compassion and want to "minister" to them- to help them. The help we offer is labeled "Jesus"- "Here, take a large dose of "Jesus" and you will feel better." This seems to have worked wonders for multitudes. Great, but that is not what Jesus is for, nor is it the best way to help needy people in the long run. Our singular calling is to exalt God and exult in His Grace. When this is done, when He is lifted up, then He will draw people unto Himself and they will be truly healed. We are dead wrong to go about doing the reverse. The order is "Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth." Only after that comes our daily bread. I have met innumerable people, living life on their own, autonomous terms, who have problems and turn to the Lord to solve those problems---and then go on living life on their own, autonomous terms. Wrong! "Autonomous" means being a law unto ones self - doing things "my way". Wrong way! At the end of the day. the question is not how many hungry people did we serve; but, was God exalted today? Did these hungry, now filled, people come to Christ. Were their hearts and minds surrendered to Him today? The nations will come to your light, and kings to your dawning brightness. For you shall be called the city of God, the dwelling of the Holy One of Israel. When God, including His Word-Law in all things, is truly exalted in our Services, when that is why we attend and participate, then He will attract sinners to Himself for their salvation. But, you say, that is what we do every week. Is it really? Are the Hymns and songs about God? Are the sermons about God? Did we learn about His Law, as well as about His Grace? Are the prayers focused on God? Is there contrition and confession of sin in His Holy Presence? When we leave, is it in our hearts to obey His Word-Law? Let the Church be known as the the dwelling of the Holy One of Israel.

Posted by Cal in Church at 08:07

A Day of Revelation

Today, in the "secular" calendar, is "Groundhog Day" in America. Will the marmot see it's shadow? The Nation waits for the revelation about Winter. Will it last 6 more weeks? Today, in the Church calendar, commemorates the Presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple, 40 days after his birth [similar, but different, than the custom of having a new baby baptized]. This, too, is a revelation- Truth incarnate is now in the world. Our Nation does not wait for this revelation at all, but the Faithful in the Nation rejoice, as does the old man, Simeon, in today's Gospel reading-Luke 2:22-40 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying, 'Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.' Light reveals what is otherwise hidden. And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed...How people repond to Jesus reveals the truth about who they really are and how they will spend Eternity.

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 07:23

Wednesday, February 1, 2006

Throwing in the Towel? No Way

In the post prior to this one [below], do not misunderstand. I believe very deeply in the local church (otherwise, I would not despair it's disrepair. I realize most of you reading this use standards different from mine and are basically content with your church) I thoroughly enjoy serious study- I always have. One of the frustrations for many Pastors is that the demands of a busy pastorate do not allow a lot of time for study not directly related to the Ministry. Thus, I appreciate the freedom I have now to really dig in. Its great. I will focus on seeking Truth, writing what I learn and trying to share it however I can. But that is part of my despair over local churches. Members of a typical church do not value a learned Pastor or sermons that are filled with learning. "Why do you have so many books?" This is symbolized with the demise of the black academic ("Geneva") pulpit robe, marking The Pastor as The Teacher (distinct from The Priest), as well as the currently popular practice of Pastors themselves of forgoing the use of a pulpit (too authoritarian!) The problem is deeper. There is a depreciation among Christians of Theology, as well as exegetical, expository sermons- all of which require scholarship if they are done properly. This reflects a depreciation, among Christians, of loving the Lord with all one's mind and a disparagement of reason and reasoned, logical, linear discourse. (It also reflects our culture and levels and methods of education today) All of this reflects the current penchant for relational, subjective Christianity and Worship. Systematic (Classic) Theology is being replaced by "Spiritual Theology". Sunday Schools (which has been a misnomer for years) are being replaced by "Spiritual Formation Time". Being "spiritual" includes being grounded in the Great Truths.

Consequently, surveys continue to say that the great majority of church kids, who go on to secular colleges, depart whatever Faith they had. They do not have the intellectual tools and rigor needed to wrestle with, let alone pin down, the "isms" awaiting them there. They can not defend their Faith, let alone share it intelligently. "It's no secret that many kids lose their faith in college; statistics show that over 75 percent of Christian students will leave college with their faith either absent or severely damaged. Because they have no idea why they believe what they believe and have no ability to defend their beliefs, they're taken captive by ideas for which they aren't prepared." Quoted from <http://www.family.org/welcome/press/a0037569.cfm> Note: There are several reasons why students "lose faith" in college. Check out <http://www.pfm.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=BreakPoint1&Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=15238> here are churches and Pastors who are wonderful exceptions to what I describe; but that is the point: why are they exceptions? Will they become the rule? What will that require? When? I want to contribute and make a difference, not throw in the towel.

Posted by Cal in Church at 19:23

Rant & Roll

I have been working on material related to the Course I am offering here on Monday nights- Biblical Principles for Economics. This, in turn, has me studying the subject of Epistemology (Philosophy of Knowledge); particularly, the presuppositional epistemology of Cornelius Van Til. I despair developments that I see on the local church scene. I am tired of trying to relate and be relevant to the culture around me and trying to meet the perceived needs of this or that special interest group. At this point, at least, I just want to study, seek Truth and learn to think the thoughts of God after Him. I have often heard, "It's all about Jesus". Actually, it seems it is really all about Iraq, Political Corruption, Homosexuality or Racism or Poverty or New Music or "Seeker Services" or Community. For diversion, there are Sports, so-called reality TV and Award shows. On and on...

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 14:40

Trend of the Time at Gordon

Gordon-Conwell Seminary has chosen a new President. He is 44 and the Senior Pastor of one of America's influential,

contemporary, seeker-friendly, Willow Creek-type megachurches. He is excited about this opportunity to influence the next generation of Church Leaders.

<http://www.mecklenburg.org/pdf/GCTSPressRelease.pdf><http://www.mecklenburg.org/information.asp?TopicID=112>His personal website has a wealth of Resources for Ministry<http://www.serious-times.com/Information.asp?TopicID=11>

Posted by Cal in Church at 14:12

Using Philosophy and the History of Science for Christ

An excellent academic level website that covers topics under the umbrella of Philosophy is <http://www.galilean-library.org/home.php> Among many interesting articles is an excellent one rebutting the Judge's decision in the recent case in Dover re Intelligent Design. This is a non-Christian argument about the nature of Science and scientific theory. It is the kind of educated approach Christians should use. What is said here undermines the false claims made for methodological Naturalism [http://www.galilean-library.org/blog/Note](http://www.galilean-library.org/blog>Note) the article after the one above about "Dangerous Ideas". Discussing what it says could lead to an opportunity to effectively share the Gospel with anyone who agrees with the article

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 13:36