

Sunday, November 21, 2021
Christ the King, Sunday
Pastor Matt Duerr

The Why of it All-The T. D!

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father; and from our Lord and savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

The why of it all, that's the title of our sermon series, and we're dealing with the why of relationships. Relationships between God and man, and relationships between man and man, and relationships between Christian and society. We're dealing with some very heavy questions. The first why is why did God create the world and us? And we saw that it wasn't that God wants something from us; rather He wants something with us, a relationship with Him. To walk in the garden with Him as Adam and Eve did.

Last week, we tackled that question; Why does God forgive us and save us? It's all about reconciliation and restoration. Reconciling us to Him, restoring that relationship with Him so that we can be in heaven with Him for all eternity. And you know I want to take just a little tangent here and just go off for a minute on heaven; because again I think we've turned it into something that is again too earthly, and we don't really think about what heaven is. We see it as a place, a location. But heaven is really defined by the Who. Heaven is where God is. And where God is, is where there are streets paved with gold; and you know the sun doesn't beat down on your back, and there's no more mourning or crying. Why is that the case? It's because heaven is where God is. That's the definition of heaven. And hell is where God is not. And since God is a God of order and not disorder, hell is literally chaos.

Now, today's question focuses on why does God want us to grow up into Christ or why does God want us to share in Christlikeness? And you might be asking yourself; 'Well, does he really want us to share in the likeness of Christ? Or can we really share in the likeness of the very Son of God?' But it's really taking that relationship to a whole new level. We're looking at that relationship at the level that it is between God the

Father and God the Son. It's obviously a very big topic, because of if you Google books on spiritual growth, you will find there is a plethora of them dealing with how to spiritually grow your church and spiritually grow the individual. The problem is these books are focused on the how to's and they ultimately are "I" focused. What must I do? And why? Well that again comes out as transactional thinking.

But why do we want spiritual growth? And for that matter, what really is spiritual growth? Spiritual growth is a deeper, stronger relationship with God and others. How many of you in a relationship, want that relationship to be deeper and stronger? What husband does not want to have a deeper and stronger relationship with his wife? Or wife with her husband? Or parents with their children? And so, it is with God. What kind of a relationship does He want with us? Ultimately, He wants to have the same relationship with us, His children, as He has with His Son. What does that relationship look like? Well, consider what Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." He was like His Father in every way. Again, when we looked in the gospels, John chapter, 5:19 what do we read? We read that the Son does, "only what He sees the Father doing." Or in John 8:28 we see that He speaks, "just as the Father has taught me, that they all may be one in us;" the Father and the Son. It's what Paul says to the people of Ephesus, that they are to, "know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Know the love of God, and be filled with all the fullness of God, that seems impossible! But that's the relationship God wants.

And notice the dichotomy or the two natures that we see here. The Son sees what the Father is doing, that is what taught him. He saw what God was doing. And to know the law of God, is to be filled with all the fullness of God. This is the key to spiritual growth. There must be teaching. Teaching as Jesus is in the Great Commission; teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. But there must also be site; seeing it applied. It's the obedience being applied. And so, when we look at it it's really teaching and modeling. We can teach very easily to a large group; I'm teaching right now. Sharing truth, but to model it that requires a closer relationship. And it's one of the greatest challenges! It's not what do we need to know but doing what we do know. That's one of the scary parts of ministry; applying obedience so that others can see it.

And please remember you are a royal priesthood. It's not just the pastor, it's all of us are called to teach and learn and model and be obedient to Christ.

I believe this teaching and modeling is exactly what Jesus wanted in our gospel this morning when He says to His disciples come away by yourselves where did he want them to come away to a desolate place. Why a desolate place? Because there would be no distractions; a perfect environment to teach the twelve. But also, to sit down with them one on one and interact and show them and model for them what He wanted them to see. And you know the disciples learned from that, because when we look at the early church, and Acts chapter two; we see that they “devoted themselves to the Apostles’ teaching and fellowship.” Certainly, it meant fellowship with each other, but it is tied to devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching, and the fellowship with the Apostles. One on one with the Apostles, learning from them, seeing the Apostles, modeling for them the obedience to everything that Christ had told them. What do we see happening? That all who believed were together. What was the result of them all being together in unity? I quote, “Awe came upon every soul.” Why, because what people saw in the early Christian Church was different from anything else they were seeing. There was true unity. The Christian Church had gone from “I” and wanting from; to with and we. Together with each other, we believe, we do. And that we included and was centered on God. It included the indwelling of the Holy Spirit who came with power. And as a result, they were transformed by that same Holy Spirit. They no longer conformed to the world and worldly ways. Instead, they were conformed to the likeness of Christ. Take a look at our introit this morning. It's all straight out of scripture. What does it talk about? Being in the likeness of Christ, being filled with God.

And so, taking all of this now and pulling it all together, you might be saying, ‘Pastor, but what in the world does the sermon title, “The why of it all the TD” mean? What's the touchdown? It's that dichotomy. It's the teaching. Teaching, where someone talks, and others listen. Where the focus is on learning. Learning not just the how, but also learning the why. And then the second the D is discipleship. Where everyone is getting together in groups, and they are talking with each other they're listening to each other they're interacting with each other they're sharing

with each other they're growing with each other and their focus is on living what they have learned. We teach and we disciple to form Christ like character. The truth is this; teaching is part of discipling. But discipling is much more than teaching. You cannot disciple without teaching because the teaching lays the foundation for the discipleship. Unfortunately, you can teach without discipleship. So that, like the Pharisees and those who followed the Pharisees, they knew their Old Testament forward and backwards. But could they take what they knew and apply it to Jesus and see that He was the savior? No. You cannot disciple without teaching, but teaching is no good without discipling.

And it can be quite a challenge. So, as I was working on this sermon, it took me back to my early days and teaching. I had some very large classes. My largest class, I had 43 students in a fifth and 6th grade combination class. Now interestingly, towards the end of the year we took achievement tests both the 5th grade in the 6th grade classes scored in the 95th or better percentile among their peers nationwide. Now you might say, 'how in the world did you do that?' And I will tell you I didn't, I couldn't, I was overwhelmed. But I taught. I would teach the 5th graders a math lesson, it was for all of them. And when I was finished teaching, I'd say 'OK, who understands this?' And if they you know couple kids raised their hand and said, 'yeah, I got it Mr. D.' And I would say, 'OK we're working on multiplication. What's 3 times 5? 15. Why is 3 times 5= 15? Because if you add five and five and five, it makes 15. Mr. D. You're right! OK, you go sit with Johnny, do the first five problems together, Johnny explained to them why it works this way. And I would break the class up like that. And then I would go from group to group asking, 'how do you do it?' 'How are you doing? How are you doing? How are you doing?' They were modeling what I had taught, and at the end, 'OK, is everybody feeling good with this?' 'Good, now each one of you has an assignment page 42 one through 10 tomorrow.' But they were all personally accountable. They couldn't stay in the group and say, 'well I'm a part of this group and Johnny knows how to do it, so I get 100% too. No. They were taught, they were disciplined by Johnny. Now they were expected to do it.

And that's the way it is in the Christian Church. We work together, we may be taught in large groups, maybe they don't look so large, but when you put all four of our churches together, we'd have a pretty significant number of people together. But God has been good to us because He has broken us into small groups. We've got Emanuel in Jackson; we've got Foothill and Shepherd of the Hills in Valley Springs; we've got Zion in Lodi. And so, we can be taught but then we can get together, and we can grow, we can disciple in those smaller groups and we're in the perfect setting for that. We have the knowledge, we have God's word, we have His teaching, we have His Holy Spirit who Christ has sent with power. We have each other like the early church.

My prayer, and I hope it is your prayer as well. My prayer is that awe will come on every soul that runs into one of us; that sees the unity that we have, that flies in the face of all the chaos and all the disunity in society and even in the Church around us. And as they see that transformation in us conforming to Christlikeness, having that same unity with Christ, that Christ had with His Father; they will see that same unity that the disciples had with Christ, and that the early church had with Christ.

And it is that same unity that we celebrate right now. Right now, as we come together individually and corporately to the communion table; and as Christ comes to us, filling us with His fullness, giving us His Holy Spirit, bringing forgiveness to our sins, empowering us, and sharing His vision with us; a vision of unity a vision of relationship. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, it is truly an awesome thing to behold. In our Saviors' Name, Amen.