

Christ & Him Crucified

(4) The Community of the Cross: (b) Christian Cross-Culture Displayed

Introduction

Cross-Centered & Cross-Cultured

- A. We come now to the final sermon in our series: Christ & Him Crucified (the title derived from [1 Cor 2:2](#)). The first 3 messages I tried to make it overwhelmingly clear that we must be a cross-centered church. But we don't stop at mere theology or doctrine. As one of my professors used to say: "All theology is practical theology." In other words, what you believe affects who you are and what you do! And so building off of last week I am now laboring to show that the church that is centered on the cross should become a church with a culture that is more and more patterned after the cross. We don't just proclaim the cross with our lips, we portray it with our lives. The cross-centered church is to be the cross-cultured church.
1. I defended this last week from [1 Cor 4:8-13](#), where we were struggling with the question: What does union with the resurrected and triumphant Christ look like?
 - a. Did He suffer so I don't have to? Was He lamb so I can be lion? Was He poor so I can be rich? Was He servant so I can be king?
 - i. The Corinthians were claiming such things "already" for themselves. Pulling back for themselves, as it were, the new heavens and new earth and setting up their thrones here and now.
 - ii. But critical to this is discerning the times. Christ has already gone ahead into glory as the "firstfruits" ([1 Cor 15:20](#)) of the resurrection, but He has not yet put all His enemies under His feet. This world, consequently, is still upside-down, still eagerly waiting and even groaning for its redemption ([Rom 8:19-22](#)). So, when Christ's Spirit comes back to us from His place of glory, it comes back to us in a fallen and flipped world—a place where true wisdom is called foolishness and true power called weakness—resurrection looks like crucifixion.
 - (1) His resurrection life in me enables me to lay my life down like him! "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me" ([Luk 9:23](#)). We are a people being put right-side up, but still in an upside-down context. We are a new humanity in an old world. A people called out of the world but left in it...to die, "regarded as sheep to be slaughtered" ([Rom 8:36](#)). All this to say we are going to be cross-cultured.

Introductory Notes

- A. We ended last week with a call to cruciform imitation and a prayer for Christ to give us His resurrection power that we might walk the crucifixion road. This morning we're going to walk that road together as we make our way through this letter to the Corinthian church. I want to know how the Christian cross-culture manifests itself in the practical, everyday aspects of my life.
1. Let me give a little background to set up how this is going to work.
 - a. The Corinthian church is quite possibly the most difficult church Paul ever planted. Their pride and worldliness has gone off like a bomb in the community with shrapnel everywhere you look—divisive partisanship, high-handed sexual immorality, self-centered and chaotic abuse of spiritual gifts, and on and on. You have this happy little greeting in the beginning of the letter (down to 1:9), and then it's on after that—issue after issue after issue.
 - b. And in it all, Paul, staying true to his word, decides to know nothing among them “except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” (2:2). He keeps directing them to the cross, in every issue, making the clear case that the cross of Christ is not only the way of salvation (how we get right with God), but it is also the way of life (how we live now with God). This is what I'm interested in this morning—the movement from cross-centered to cross-cultured!
- B. Obviously then, with the entire letter of 1 Corinthians before us, we don't have time to look at every example. I chose a 3 of the more pointed and accessible (written on your handout). In each I want to show briefly: (1) Where the Corinthian church went wrong; (2) How Paul uses the cross of Christ to reorient them; and (3) What all this means for our cross-culture here at Mercy Hill.

(1) Cross-Culture & Sin

The Corinthian Church

- A. We left off last week in ch. 4, so perhaps it is most natural to take our first illustration from ch. 5 where Paul is dealing with the Corinthians' handling of sin in the camp.

1 Cor 5:1-2, 6

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.

² And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you...

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

1. What is going on in Corinth? To put it simply: they are not taking sin seriously. A son and his mom are sleeping together and the church seems not only complacent

about it, but perhaps even celebratory. They are not mourning such things, they are boasting in them!

- a. Perhaps this stems from a corrupt understanding of grace. There seems to have been a saying going around: “All things are lawful for me” (6:12; 10:23), as if to say: “Grace has opened the door, and I can now do whatever I want.” Whatever the case, they are cavalier and casual with sin, even arrogant and boasting in it.
2. And Paul’s mention of “leaven” connects us to the idea that sin doesn’t just sit and fester in one place, it wants to spread and infuse everything. So this is an issue that is threatening the whole church.

The Cross of Christ

A. How is Paul going to address it? Where is he going to go?

1 Cor 5:7

⁷Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

1. He leads them up Calvary’s road to the cross of Christ! “Come with me. Let’s consider His death again for our sin.”
 - a. And he speaks of the cross in exodus language, describing Christ here as our “Passover lamb”—the lamb, unblemished, whose blood protected the children of Israel from the angel of death (“when I see the blood, I will pass over you” [Exo 12:13]); the lamb whose blood initiated their redemption from the house slavery in Egypt. For they are thereafter expelled from Egypt and cross over the Red Sea into freedom as the newly constituted people of God. And this, Paul says, is what Jesus is for us. He is our Passover Lamb, our Exodus.
 - b. And as a result, we “really are unleavened.” The Feast of Unleavened Bread took place for 7 days after the slaughtering of the Passover lamb. Because of Christ’s death, you really are counted righteous, sanctified, freed from slavery to sin. I’m moving backward through the text but this really is the logic. “You are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.”
2. And then, continuing to move backwards, it is this gospel reality that then grounds the initial command: “cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump...”
 - a. God’s loving provision in Christ has set you free! Therefore don’t go back and play around in Egypt! Be free as He has already set you free! Be holy as He has already made you holy! We are not laboring for God’s acceptance here but from it! “What they must become is what they already are by the grace of God” (Fee).

- i. Knowing, trusting, and walking in such grace is the only effective way to resist sin to the point of shedding blood yourself (Heb 12:4).

The Cross-Culture of MHC

- A. A cross-cultured church, then, is one that has no room for unrepentant sin. But this passion for holiness isn't from a man-centered legalism, it's from a Christ-adoring love.
 1. Grace for us doesn't mean living easy, no worries, tinker with sin, God will forgive you. No! The "grace of God (according to Tit 2:11-14)...train[s] us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions...as we wait for our blessed hope, the appearing of...Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us!" Grace doesn't put grapes in our mouths as we lazy river our way to heaven, it puts a sword in our hands and bids us fight in the fields of war...that we be holy as the One we love is holy!
- B. Are you playing with sin? I plead with you: Pharaoh is not your friend and Egypt is not your home. What are you doing on those websites after the family's in bed?! What are you doing telling those "white" lies to advance your career?!
 1. Step out and gaze upon the blood of Christ that drips from around your door, blood shed for your sin, in your place. And He holds out His hand. His love is worth more than all the riches of this world. And it is yours. Child of God, be who you are in Christ!
 - a. Let's look like the cross in the way we, by His resurrection Spirit, "put to death...what is earthly in [us]" (Col 3:5a)...out of love from Him and for Him. This is how cross-culture deals with sin.

(2) Cross-Culture & Conflict

The Corinthian Church

- A. As we turn to ch. 6, we find Paul shifting gears to deal with yet another issue in the church. It seems that some members are defrauding other members. And accusations start hurling back and forth and the ascending friction leads them to take one another to court before the local magistrate. "I've got to defend my rights here!"
 1. And Paul hears of all this going on and he says this:
 - 1 Cor 6:7-8
 - ⁷To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?
 - ⁸But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers!
 - a. There is pride and worldliness in this church. Not only are they not willing to suffer their rights for another, they are actually exploiting others for their own gain. They are moving in the opposite direction!

The Cross of Christ

- A. Where is Paul going to go to deal with this? He goes right to the cross! He can't get past the cross! And neither should we.

1 Cor 6:9b-11

⁹ ...Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,

¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1. I thought Paul just said that they are being **thieves** and **greedy** and **swindlers** (present tense). Now he says, "**such were some of you**" (past tense). How?! You were **washed, sanctified, justified** because of Christ's work on the cross. His blood procured these benefits for us.
2. And this gospel reality, grounds Paul's exhortation for them to forego their rights and "**suffer loss**" and "**be defrauded.**" Christ lost it all on that cross for us. He was ripped off. We took his riches and He took our poverty. And He did it because of His great love for us. With His infinite riches now ours, do we not have enough in the bank to let others rip us off? Or must we demand our rights? Paul says, such were some of you, but not anymore. Be who you are. Look like the cross!

The Cross-Culture of MHC

- A. So, Mercy Hill, "**when one of you has a grievance against another...**" (6:1), what do you do? I want these words to echo in our ears until they become the desire of our hearts: "**Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?**"

1. While this clashes with the cultural values around us, it accords with our Savior and His cross! Is conflict—someone (boss, spouse, coworker, etc.) slandering, manipulating, mistreating you—seen as an aggravation or an opportunity? "I get to show them the Christ I love so much!"
 - a. So when you are tempted to fight for your rights, press in to the One who laid down all of His, so that you, the thief and swindler and sinner, could be washed and given the world. And knowing the joy set before you, endure the cross of loss and fraud. This is how cross-culture deals with conflict.

(3) Cross-Culture & Family Dynamics

The Corinthian Church

- A. Now, I want to go back to the very beginning (1:4-9). While this last example is not a specific issue Paul is dealing with in the church, it actually sets us up to understand how Paul

is going to deal with every issue in the church. What drives family dynamics within the household of God?

1. I saved this for last because, having discussed the cross-culture with regard to sin and conflict, setting the bar high, I wonder how many might be feeling a bit hopeless of ever attaining such things. What happens when we or others in the church don't measure up?
- B. Knowing something now of the corruption and immaturity of this church, It is most amazing that he opens this letter the way that he does:

1 Cor 1:4–9

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus,
⁵that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—
⁶even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you—
⁷so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,
⁸who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.
⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1. Note what Paul says about them: “I give thanks...always for you” (v. 4); “in every way...enriched in...all speech and knowledge” (v. 5); “not lacking in any spiritual gift” (v. 7); they will be “guiltless in the day of...Jesus Christ” (v. 8)?!
 - a. Are we talking about the same people here? How is Paul able to say this? Is this just convention? Is he naive? No! Where then is Paul getting this?

The Cross of Christ

- A. The cross of Christ shines through every word of this paragraph! He begins by noting the grace given them in Christ (v. 4). He ends by noting their calling into fellowship-union with Christ (v. 9). And in the middle He sees them in view of this union (vv. 5-8). They are headed to guiltless glory not because they deserve it but because they are united to the only One who ever has: Jesus! Paul sees the Corinthians, in spite of all their serious issues, in the light of the cross. And there is, therefore, no end to his hope and confidence for them.
1. By beginning this way, he makes it plain at the outset that he is not focusing on their sins because he takes joy in it, or is fed up with them, or has no hope for them, but rather because he loves them and wants them to experience the abundant life that is already theirs in Christ.
- B. Jesus did not throw away Paul. Therefore Paul refused to throw away the Corinthian church.

1 Cor 15:9–10

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am...

1. It's no wonder Paul would later say "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more!" (Rom 5:20). And he takes the same grace that was shown to Him, and sees the Corinthians in light of it.

The Cross-Culture of MHC

- A. So what about us? How are we doing as a family? Are we showing the cross in the way we love and hope for one another? Do we know that love and hope from Christ for ourselves? Do we see ourselves in these verse, He will sustain us to the end, guiltless! Are there people in this church we would rather gag than read these verses to? Do we realize the accomplishment of the One we are united to? The Second and Last Adam. Firstborn from the dead. Living in us. Think of the overwhelming possibility and promise for the one united to such a Lord! He has overcome the world and He is in us by His Spirit. There is nothing you, or your brother or sister cannot do in Christ!
 1. So are we drawing attention to every failure and sin? Or are we speaking hope, seeing abundant evidence of God's grace in one another? The cross comes in with hope for the chief of sinners. Let's look like the cross!

A Gospel Theater

- A. Allow me to close with one final reflection. There is something in our text from last week (4:8-13) that I wanted to end the series with here today. It's a point that can't be made immediately from the English text but stands forth in the Greek beneath it. I'm focusing in on that word "spectacle" in 4:9:

⁹ For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men.

1. The word "spectacle" is theatron in the Greek. Do you hear it? It means "theater." The apostles, and the church in imitation of them (4:16; 11:1), are to be a theater to the cosmos—to both angels and to men.
 - a. And we hear Eph 3:10 echoing behind this text: "...through the church the manifold wisdom of God [is now] made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.'
 - i. It is through the church that God puts His glory on display for the universe!
2. So the church has a Divine playwright, an expansive stage, and a cosmic audience! But what is the theater showing?

- a. “Men sentenced to death...” The cross of Christ on display in a community!
- B. This kind of cruciform, cross-cultured community is set up by God as a theater to the universe! People ought to look in and see the wisdom and power of God (in the way we deal with sin and conflict and family dynamics).
- 1. We err when we think that evangelism is merely sharing words to unbelievers, handing out Bible tracts. Let me give you the most effective evangelistic technique, look to your left and to your right. That’s it. A redeemed community, loving God and loving neighbor, displaying before the world the cross-culture of our Savior! The church itself is God’s evangelistic program for reaching the world. We are not merely sharing propositional truths we are showing an existential reality—a new humanity, a heavenly colony, constituted around the cross of Christ!
- C. So, as this morning’s service is now drawing to a close, I want you to imagine the curtains of the theater that is our church now drawing open. What are we going to put on display? O let us show the glory of Christ and Him crucified, so that as we suffer with Him on this crucifixion road, the unbelieving world might see and conclude: Christ must truly be raised, and “God is really among you” (1 Cor 14:25).