

Let us pray,

Lord, give us the courage to do what you call us to do.

Amen.

Why do we come to church?

Why do we care about what the preacher has to say?

Why does the Eucharist and Baptism matter?

Much of what we have come to believe in modern Christianity is that being a Christian will make our lives better.

That if we give to God, God will reward us ten fold.

As if God is a bank of goodness with compounding interest.

The churches that are growing the fastest and have record numbers, are those that proclaim that this Christian faith of ours will improve our lives and that we will get what we want from God as long as we accept Jesus as our savior, and give to God's church.

But here is the thing, I am not sure that being a Christian is suppose to make our lives better.

At least not in the sense that many Americans look at life being better.

Many preachers proclaim that if you just do what God tells you to do then you will be rewarded with riches, prosperity and good health.

Except, I just don't know if that is true.

We hear Jesus say:

“Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

Its a sad truth that this line of scripture has been used to justify all types of selfish desires in the name of Jesus Christ.

If we believe that Jesus is our Lord and Savior, then we can get whatever we want if we just use Christ's name right?

That's unfortunately a gross misunderstanding of what Jesus is trying to say here.

He leads with the understanding that those who believe in him will do the works that he is doing and continue those works to possibly even greater effect.

He isn't saying, that those who believe in him will be rewarded with health, gold, money, and prosperity.

What he is saying, is that those who believe in him and ask him for anything, which I believe he means within the framework of doing his work in the world, will be listened to.

We have turned a selfless religion into a selfish one.

We have turned the savior of the world, into a savior of some.

We have turned Jesus who ate with and called family the widow, the prostitute, the murders, the outcasts, the undesirables.

And cleaned Jesus up to be a savior of the popular, rather than the unpopular.

Jesus has become an idol for self prosperous intentions, rather than a movement towards radical acceptance and hospitality.

Jesus has become popular, not by his message, but by the false narrative that he will provide us with whatever we want, as long as we say the words, "I accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior".

Forget the cross, forget the martyrs, forget the sacrifice.

Jesus is simply a means to an ends, a way to get to our real God, which is wealth, prosperity, and the biggest devil of them all, comfort.

When we look to Jesus, we like to only see the part where he is kind and merciful and generous.

And he absolutely is all of those things.

However, Jesus was very clear that he is also the judge, and that he wants us to not just believe in him, but to enter into the life that he has started.

It is not a life of prosperity, it is not a life sitting on a throne, it is not a life of political or social or monetary power.

This life that Jesus is inviting us into is one of poverty.

This life that Jesus is calling us to willingly live, is one where we give up our desires to raise ourselves up, and rather reach out and among those whom are at the bottom and the deepest and darkest places of society.

We don't come to Jesus to get our hands cleaned.

We come to Jesus to get our hands dirty.

To be bathed in the blood of the lamb, and recognize that a life serving Christ, is a life of self sacrifice, which is also filled with abundant mercy, and unconditional love, especially for those that the world does not love.

We have this human nature issue, where we think that we are smarter than God.

That we are capable of out witting God and that God's way is stupid, its unpractical and out of touch.

And that is fine, God allows us to think that.

But we must be honest with ourselves, and not associate a life of prosperity and a desire for worldly comforts and scapegoating, with the desires of God.

Those at the top of society love to punch down, and those at the bottom, feel the only way up is to punch up.

But maybe, we can make this world a better place for all, by stopping the punching.

And instead, reaching out a hand, giving to those in need, sacrificing some of our own comforts, so that others may have a place to sleep, food to eat, clothing to wear and a reason to live.

Its ok if we decide to not follow Jesus.

We have free will, and when we are ready, Jesus will be waiting.

But when we decide to follow, we must learn to be better at not putting our desires onto Jesus.

Jesus did not live a life of comfort, and neither did his disciples.

And Jesus does not call us into a life of comfort either.

That is our desire, not his.

Christ's desire is that no one should be comfortable, until all are comfortable.

Christ's desire is that all of creation is loved and cared for.

Because Jesus is not our private personal savior.

He did not just come for you and me, he came for the whole world.

He came for every human being, every creature, every element of this cosmos.

And because of that, Nothing is outside the care and concern of God in this world.

By becoming or being Christian, it doesn't elevate us, it doesn't provide us with an out.

By becoming Christian, it provides us with a mission, with purpose, and with a framework of what true love looks like.

If we are only concerned with how God is affecting our own life, we are missing one of the most crucial parts of what it means to be a Child of God and a disciple of Jesus.

We forget that Jesus did not come for me, he came for us.

And a world focused on me, myself and I will lose its humanity, its generosity, its love, and its purpose.

If we can't learn to love those who hurt us, who say the wrong thing, who do things that we disagree with, that say things we don't always understand.

If we can't learn to love our enemy, heaven will be lost on us.

Because heaven isn't just for me, myself and I.

Heaven is for all of us, Jesus is for all of us, and as disciples, may we learn to be uncomfortable, until all are comfortable.

Amen.