

My Father's House

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The Gospel Is A Scandal And A Stumbling Block

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Jesus has come to bring heaven to earth. He preaches a supernatural gospel so that we will think and love and act like Him. Nevertheless, God's ways are not man's ways for as high as the heavens are above the earth, so are God's ways above our ways and God's thoughts above our thoughts (cf *Is 55*).

Jesus would say, *Blessed is he who is not scandalized in Me.* And St. Paul would say, *The message of the cross does not make sense to worldly people.* But to those who are being saved, it is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

We Preach Christ Crucified:

The Power Of God And The Wisdom Of God

St. Paul's exact words are, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.'

"Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength," (1 Cor 1:18-26).

Jesus, The Prophet

God the Father foretold through Moses that He would raise up a universal prophet like unto Moses. Most scripture scholars see this as a messianic promise. Jesus comes, therefore, as the prophet among all prophets. His message was prophetic, His manner of speaking was prophetic. *Be holy as God is holy.* He spoke this message with a forthrightness and a holy boldness. He did not mince words. *If your eye is an occasion of sin, pluck it out. If your hand is an occasion of sin, cut it off.* Although most do not take these words seriously, we can see even in His very manner of speaking a strong call to holiness.

Since he was speaking to poor, human men and women, His message often caused a shock. When He spoke of becoming poor, and added only with difficulty, *can a rich man enter the kingdom of heaven,* and that it was easier for *a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God,* His apostles were so startled that they said, "Who then can be saved?" And Jesus answered, "With God, all things are possible."

The High Road

Nevertheless, the Gospel is the narrow and high road. *For those who are willing to surrender themselves to the lordship of Jesus, his yoke will be easy and his burden will be light. However, to those who want to hold on to control, the message of the Gospel will always prove offensive.* Listen to the words of Jesus. They are a two-edged sword that divide not only flesh from spirit, but even soul from spirit (cf Hebrews). First and foremost, Jesus said, "Be holy as your heavenly father is holy." Love Him with all of your heart, all of your mind, all of your soul, and all of your strength. These words are not only challenging but do prove offensive to those who do not want to surrender.

Most Americans, for example, would find them intrusive. The American mindset is that everyone should be allowed to do their own thing and that nobody has a right to tell us how to think, love and act. Here comes Jesus who wants to be lord of all, who wants to control every thought, every desire, every action. There is bound to be a clash. Flesh and spirit simply do not mix. What right does He have to tell us how to think and act? Most Americans, even most church-going Americans, would balk at this. About 30 percent of Americans are willing to give God an hour or so on Saturday or Sunday. But to give Him all their time? That is to give Him 168 hours out of 168 hours each week? That's asking too much.

A Jealous God

And yet, that is the demand of the Father and the Son. *Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart and all of your strength and all of your mind (Deut 6:6).* This command is meant for all Jews and all Christians. Some are willing to tithe; that is, to give 10 percent of their treasure to the Lord. But that's only a beginning. Ten percent should lead to 30 percent and then to 90 percent and then to 100 percent. We're all meant to be like Mother Teresa or St. Francis who gave *everything* to God.

An Enigma

And yet, these are scandalous words to the worldly, the unsaved and the compromising. Human nature wants to have our cake and eat it too, even in the spiritual realm. We want, for example, to be rich and still be considered holy. Yet Jesus clearly teaches, *Blessed are the poor for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; and woe to the rich.* We American adults want to watch the normal servings of American television with a mixture of violence, promiscuity, vulgarity and ungodliness. Yet to all these people Jesus says, *Blessed is the pure of heart for they shall see God.*

We struggle to climb to the top of our worldly professions with ethical standards far shorter than truly Christian. And yet we want to be considered as holy. It is very difficult, for example, for an American lawyer, a businessperson, doctor, or politician not to compromise. The legal profession, the business world, the medical profession and the political arena are so filled with pride, dishonesty, compromise that only the truly heroic can truly remain holy. Yet the Lord strongly speaks against compromising. Be hot or cold, He tells us; but if you are lukewarm, I'll spit you out of My mouth. There is no doubt about it, it is a tough message.

The Fearful Need Not Apply

The Gospel message comes with a promise that Jesus will send the Holy Spirit to all those who say 'yes' to Him. The Holy Spirit will enlighten their minds, inflame their hearts and empower their lives to think, love and act like Jesus. The Gospel of Jesus is so exalted that it can not be lived out in human strength alone. It calls for God's wisdom, God's love and God's power, which are given by God's Spirit. "Without me you can do nothing," Jesus tells us. And yet, we know we can do all things that He asks in and through Him who constantly strengthens us. Jesus does not give us the spirit of fear but one of confidence, power, an emboldened will, and a sound mind.

Enter The Catholic Church

In order to proclaim the fullness of His message in its entirety and pristine holiness, Jesus founded one Church upon Peter as upon 'The Rock'. He gave to Peter and his successors a prophetic anointing so that whatsoever they would bind upon earth would be bound in heaven. He promised to be with His Church and protect it from the forces of evil so that the forces of death's realm would not and could not prevail against it. That Church would be the "pillar and the standard of truth." What Jesus taught in the fullness and purity, the Catholic Church would teach. Jesus would hold up the high ideals of poverty, virginity, and humble obedience for His followers. And the Catholic Church would hold up the ideals of poverty, chastity and obedience for her ministers.

Jesus would teach that the pure of heart would see God and that no one was even allowed to look with lust. He would teach the sanctity of marriage and especially of the marriage bed. The Catholic Church would teach that one had to be ordained by God to enter into the covenant of marriage. *And that only a validly married husband and wife had the right to use the pro-created power of sex for God's high purposes* which are their mutual love and the procreation and education of children born of this holy union. So holy is sex in the eyes of God and the Church that it cannot be trifled with by those who are unmarried. Thus, all sexual activity outside of marriage is gravely sinful. This includes sodomy, premarital sex, fornication and adultery, as well as self-abuse. This teach of the Catholic Church is so offensive to many that they will even leave the Catholic Church to find a more liberal or permissive Protestant church that would not proclaim the pristine message of Jesus, Himself. They would preach a different gospel. And yet the Gospel, as proclaimed by Jesus and His Mystical Body is the *only* Gospel. It is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

The One True Church

Jesus founded only one church. Because God is one, he wanted the Church to be one. There would be one bridegroom - Christ, and one bride - the Church. He would pray that members of that Church would be one as He and the Father are one. His wish is that there would be one flock and one shepherd. This is a very offensive message to all those who believe in a divided Church. There are now some 28,000 Christian denominations not founded by Jesus but by man. This has lead to great confusion and has sapped greatly the strength of the Church to infiltrate and oppose pagan cultures. And yet most American believe that this is God's will. They will even say, 'It doesn't really make any difference, as long as you believe in God.' What God? The God of unity or the God of division? They are not the same God. The true God is the God of unity. The true God only founded one Church. The true God is not the author of confusion nor division.

Church Must Proclaim Holiness

That Church must proclaim the full message of holiness because Jesus its founder is holy. Holy also is His message and His Gospel. Jesus has given to His Church the Holy Spirit to sanctify all its members. Jesus has given to His Church all the sacraments. He gave baptism to nourish us into the supernatural life of the Church. He gave confirmation to confirm us in the ways of the Lord. He gave the sacrament of reconciliation so that through His priests He could forgive our sins and call us back to repentance and forgiveness. But most importantly, He gave us the Eucharist to transform us into Himself. He gave us His own body, blood, soul and divinity to nourish us on our pilgrim journey. He gave the sacrament of holy order to strengthen His priests and bishops so that they will be examples of sanctity for the flock. He gave the sacrament of matrimony to purify married couples so that they would bring forth holy children. He gave the sacrament of the anointing of the sick so that those sick in mind and heart could be healed.

Enter St. Paul

St. Paul would teach in his pastoral letter to the Ephesians, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly beloved children and live a life of love just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. But among you, there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or any kind of impurity, or of greed because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be

obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking which are out of place. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ" (Eph 5:1-5).

That Church Is Catholic

Because God loves everyone, He wished for the new covenanted people to be universal or Catholic. No one was meant to be excluded. For Jesus wished that all would be saved and come to the full knowledge of the truth. He gave to the Church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ might be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (cf Eph 4:11-13).

To say that the Catholic Church is the one Church founded by Christ can easily be proved historically for it is the only church that goes back to the year 30 A.D. Historically, it is the only church that Christ founded. We know that Christ only wanted one church. And yet, if anyone today were to say that the Catholic Church is the one true church founded by Christ, they would soon discover that many people would soon take offense. And yet, as Jesus proclaimed the truth, the Church must proclaim the truth because it is His Body. Jesus, working through the Church today, would find His sayings just as offensive to the people of the world of our day as He did proclaiming them by the Sea of Galilee or in the city of Jerusalem nearly 2,000 years ago. His words are both forever true and, at the same time, forever offensive.

God Will Have His Way

St. Paul tells us, Blessed be God the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has chose us in Him before the world began to be holy and blameless in His sight. The author of Hebrews tells us to seek that perfection without which no one can see God. And the author of the Book of Revelation tells us that no unclean thing can enter heaven. St. Paul further tells us that each person has to be careful on how he or she builds upon the one foundation which is Jesus. Those who use gold, silver and precious stones (metaphors for a life of real holiness) will receive their reward. Those who have used wood, stubble or straw (metaphors for a life with compromise) will be saved only going through the fire (of purgation or purgatory) (cf 1 Cor 3:10-15).

Purgatory

In His love and mercy, Christ has made a way for everyone to be totally purified. Since He knows that no impure person can enter into heaven, and since knowing the heart of man He full-well realized that most men and women are somewhat impure when they die, He has made a way for them to be purified in purgatory. There, they shall be refined like gold in the fire so that when they enter into heaven they will be fully like Him and will be able to see God face to face. There in purgatory, the rich will be so pure of heart that they will become poor in spirit. The proud will become as humble as He. The worldly will become totally heavenly-minded. The bitter will become totally forgiving. Every sin or vestige of sin will be burnt out of us so that each of us will become the full-blown reflection of Jesus according to our own personality. *We with unveiled faces shall then reflect like mirrors the brightness of the Son of God who is our glory.*

The Kingdom Handed Over To The Father

Then Christ shall hand over the Church in all of its glory to the Father. It will be a glorious Church, a holy Church, a humble Church, a worshipping Church, a Catholic Church. No one will protest when the Lord introduces Mary to the saints in heaven as Queen of Heaven and as their mother. No former Moslem or Buddhist will protest when they see God face to face in His Triune brilliance. There will be no heresy, no division; but God shall be all-in-all. And yet, to state this today would be offensive. But it is the truth revealed by Christ; that is, His mysterious plan revealed through the Church (cf Eph 3:9-10).

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