

New in Christ
Developed by Bob Young
Text: Col. 3:11-17*

Introduction

Jaroslav Pelikan distinguishes tradition and traditionalism. Tradition is the living faith of the dead; traditionalism is the dead faith of the living.

The living word is alive—gives birth, is creative, innovative.

1 How you are graced: holy and beloved

Scripture starts with grace. Do our students learn out of grace or to get a grade? Do we teach and work out of grace or for our salary?

How and where are you experiencing the grace of God?

2 Virtues: how you are loved, how you are chosen

Here we have the models of story which communicate to us the importance and application of these virtues.

Theology must provide the structure and bones to hold up the virtues and character.

We in the United States do not know how to lament, that is why we struggle after national tragedies.

This is not in our vocabulary, not in our experience. We do not know how to suffer. We have no language of suffering. There is never suffering language in upbeat churches. We must broaden our religious experience.

How can we convince the world that we have a heart when we appear so arrogant in the midst of our wealth?

In the text, these virtues are treated one by one, not merely a quickly read list so we can get on the rest of the passage.

Consider the virtue of love

→ We do not love one another enough to sing one another's songs....I do not like that song—we were not worshiping you....all is contemporary—we are doing it now....God has quite eclectic tastes."

→ We must learn that the will is supreme—not the emotions. The will is the heart, heart is not emotions. In the OT, emotions were kidneys. In the New Testament, emotions were bowels.

→ The church is a wonderful place to practice loving your enemies. We must call people to goodness, beauty, and truth. This is the genuine source of reconciliation. Recapitulate is literally "re-head"—Christ is the head.

→ When will we learn priorities? Almost 3000 died on 9-11, but on that same day 36500 people in our world died of starvation.

3 How virtues can be destroyed

Peace is destroyed by our human innovation rather than letting God do his creative work within us.

This is the pitfall of innovation.

We may mis-live the tradition. We go our own way, read this text in "The Message".

We may mis-state the tradition. Often the Bible doesn't pin it down. The Bible is purposefully ambiguous, e.g. holy and beloved in this text compared to "The Message".

We may mis-read the tradition. This is most obvious with regard to fighting. Where did we get the idea that God wants us to fight? Let God fight for us. God will be our warrior. Holy war is the war where we

take no booty. Abraham, Gen. 22; Ex. 14-15; Gideon; David in 2 Sam 11 gets in trouble because he fails to appreciate holy war.

The problem is obvious from Cain and Abel onward. Violence doesn't work.

If it is an eye for an eye, the world will be blind.

We begin with a world of violence and vengeance, but the blood that is shed cries out in injustice. An eye for an eye is an improvement, but the ultimate solution is in the message of Jesus in Matthew 5-7.

God calls his people to uniqueness—let us be that unique people.

Our tradition is one that calls us to care for the poor, homeless, widows.

So much of human innovation is ugly.

We must return to the word of God, we must be deeply rooted to carry the weight of truth. There is too much “now” in theology without the rooting of God's word. Too much reaction to the present culture, rather than applying the tradition of the word of God to today's world.

4 How virtues can be built

Let the word richly dwell in you, the text suggests we should live triunely. The trinity is not a doctrine, but is for a way of living. Do we care that others are present?

5 Encouraging one another

Psalms, hymns, spiritual songs represents an important progression. Have we done what God says until all are present in our worship? Psalms are the old way; hymns are universal; spiritual songs are local and contemporary, all are tied to the word.

6 Gratitude

Gratitude is the bridge between how we sing and how we live. We don't know how to sing and so we don't know how to live.

Gratitude is wonderfully freeing.

Consider: the holiness of beauty vs. the beauty of holiness. Our culture has misunderstood sanctity, the goal, and the priorities and has thus mis-focused attention on the wrong things. We must return to the beauty of holiness. The main concept is beauty, and holiness contributes to the beauty of the world.

Thank God.

7 Do all in the name of Jesus

At the crucifixion the Trinity was willing to be torn apart so we do not have to be. The Father turned his back on the Son, but with the Son's approval because of their hatred of sin. The Holy Spirit held the Trinity together in that moment.

How can we fail to appreciate the work of Christ on the cross? This is God at work, re-creating his creation forever, and dealing once for all with sin.

*developed from notes taken during a presentation by Marva Dawn