

Last Sunday we included the following quote as our words “For Contemplation:

“The followers of Christ have been called to peace. And they must not only have peace but they must also make it. To that end they renounce all violence and tumult... They maintain fellowship where others would break it off. They renounce hatred and wrong. In so doing they overcome evil with good, and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate.”

The quote is from “The Cost of Discipleship” written by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Following the worship service, and many of the positive comments that were shared about the service, I received this little summary in the ARC Lite newsletter from the Altamont Reformed Church, and thought to share it with you all.

In the first part of the twentieth century, when the German church was infected with nationalist fervor, there was a collection of theologians and pastors who stood against the tide, reminding everyone that our obligation is to Christ, and not anyone else: not people, not ideology. One of those was Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and he wrote an ever applicable book on what it means to follow Jesus Christ in the modern world, and especially in difficult times of great injustice.

“Discipleship” or “The Cost of Discipleship” (it is titled both in English) puts forth the idea of costly grace over cheap grace. After all, Christ doesn’t say to us, first and foremost, “accept me,” or even, “believe in me,” but rather: Take up your cross and follow me.

Bonhoeffer begins his book:

“Cheap grace is the mortal enemy of the church. Cheap grace means grace as bargain-basement goods, cut-rate forgiveness, cut-rate comfort, cut-rate sacrament; grace as the church’s inexhaustible pantry, from which it is doled out by careless hands without hesitation or limit. It is grace without a price, without costs.... Cheap grace means grace as doctrine, as principle, as system. It means forgiveness of sins as a general truth; it means God’s love as merely a Christian idea of God. ... Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without repentance; it is baptism without the discipline of community; it is the Lord’s Supper without confession of sin; it is absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without the living, incarnate Jesus Christ.”

Bonhoeffer speaks, rather, of grace as costly. “Above all,” he writes,” grace is costly because it was costly to God, because it costs God the life of God’s Son—‘you were bought with a price’—and because nothing can be cheap to us which is costly to God.”

In the rest of the book, Bonhoeffer goes on to describe the life of faith lived out of a framework of costly grace, the center of which is a deep and meaningful framing of life based on the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5-7. And for him, the Sermon on the Mount is not just nice ideas, but it is a real and tangible thing which is to entirely reframe the Christian way of operating in the world.

And then, this week as I was listening to the radio, I heard this song by Phil Wickham

“The Jesus Way”

If you curse me, then I will bless you
If you hurt me, I will forgive
And if you hate me, then I will love you
I choose the Jesus way

[Verse 2]

If you're helpless, I will defend you
If you're burdened, I'll share the weight
And if you're hopeless, then let me show you
There's hope in the Jesus way

[Chorus]

I follow Jesus, I follow Jesus
He wore my sin, I'll gladly wear His name
He is the treasure, He is the answer
Oh, I choose the Jesus way

[Verse 3]

If you strike me, I will embrace you
And if you chain me, I'll sing His praise
And if you kill me, my home is Heaven
For I choose the Jesus way

[Bridge]

And I choose surrender, I choose to love
Oh God, my Savior, You'll always be enough
I choose forgiveness, I choose grace
I choose to worship, no matter what I face
I choose the Jesus way, I choose the Jesus way
I choose the Jesus way, I choose the Jesus way

[Chorus]

I follow Jesus, I follow Jesus
He wore my sin, I'll gladly wear His name
He is the treasure, He is the answer
Oh, I choose the Jesus way

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