

Notes for the Ekklesia Meeting

Info: (651) 283-0568 Discipleship Training Ministries, Inc www.dtminc.org Today's Date: May 30, 2010

A Few Chosen People

by Dan Trygg

“For you are a holy people to the Yahweh your God; and *Yahweh has chosen you* to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”

Deuteronomy 7:6

“You did not choose Me, but *I chose you*, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you. ¹⁷ This I command you, that you love one another. ¹⁸ If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but *I chose you* out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

John 15:16-19

“And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but *chosen* and precious in the sight of God, ⁵ you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ... ⁹ But *you are a chosen race*, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰ for you once were not a people, but now you are God's people; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. ¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul. ¹² Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

1 Peter 2:4,5,9-12

I was talking with a friend the other day about the sad state of the church in our country today. It becomes increasingly apparent to me how *so many of us are misled as to what being a follower of Jesus is all about*. The impression that the unbelieving world perceives about what it means to be a Christian is not at all what people in the first centuries of the church would have witnessed and understood. **Our whole religious enterprise has been “watered down” and “prettied-up” so that it has little real impact**, beyond entertainment and “feel good” experiences. Too many churches are so concerned about success in numbers that they have sacrificed the call to serious obedience to God in order to attract the crowds. **Our version of theology is all about us**, ...our happiness, ...our prosperity, ...our financial success. We want God to bless *our* plans, *our* agendas, *our* hopes, dreams and aspirations. We want *Him* to serve *us*. **We don't often honestly ask, “Lord, what do You want from me? What is Your plan for me?”** Or, if we do, somehow our perception of His plan for us does not look very radically different than the lives of most of the people around us. **We don't often see the radical change of life that we read about in the Bible.** Jesus' commission to His church was to “discipline the nations, ...teaching them to observe all that He commanded them” (Matt. 28:19,20). We have not generally been effective at getting church attendees to really grab hold of this as an important objective in their lives. **Believers often spend little time developing a real relationship with God. He is not a priority in their waking moments. He is an addendum to their busy, self-centered lives.**

I have recently been impressed by the shift in our cultural understanding of what worship is all about. **In the Biblical language and worldview, the primary meaning of the words translated as “worship” would have been to “pay homage, deference, respect to” and “to offer unconditional allegiance and obedience”.** Sadly, I don't believe that is where the minds or hearts of most worshipers in our religious culture go when they think of “worship”. They think of music, prayers, and maybe a religious experience, ...maybe even lifting their hands, or swaying their bodies to the music. Do they think, “Lord, I am here *to serve You*. I am here *at Your command*.”? If they do actually stumble across those words, do they *mean* what they *say*? Is it a commitment shown by their choices a few hours later, ...or, in a few days' time? **What do people mean when they say, “The worship at church was really good today?” What? Their homage, their offer of unconditional allegiance and obedience was “really good” that day? No. They are usually talking about having an emotional or religious experience, ...something that touched or moved them.**

The greatest dangers to the genuine Church of Jesus Christ are either counterfeit Christians, or compromised or complacent believers. The Bible warns that there will be tares sown among the wheat, sons and daughters of the evil one who infiltrate the Church for the purpose of hindering the work and retarding the growth of God's children. There has also always been the danger of God's children falling into sin, or becoming lukewarm and lackadaisical about their walk with God. **“Immature Christianity” is nothing other than “fleshly religion”.** Instead of being serious followers of Jesus Christ, such people try to dabble in both kingdoms. Satan doesn't mind this much, because such people are rarely a threat to him. In fact, they are easy to exploit for his purposes. Like the writer of Ecclesiastes observed, **“dead flies make a perfumer's oil stink**, so a little foolishness is weightier than wisdom and honor,” and “one sinner destroys much good” (9:18;10:1). It doesn't take much hypocrisy, or scandal, to fuel a smear campaign against the Church, or to argue that all this “Jesus stuff” is just bunk. **Satan is so adept at drawing us away**

from the *real* issue, growing in our faith and becoming mature, productive disciples. He gets us into crusades or controversies, where we either look like fools, or where we fall into the same kind of mudslinging that our opponents use. At that point, it doesn't even matter if what we are saying is right or true, ...what matters is that we have alienated people from Jesus over some fleshly attitude on our part, some irrational thinking or untestable claim, or some secondary issue or political belief that is not at all the core of what Jesus is all about. Instead of leading people to Jesus, and allowing Him to work on their hearts and minds, we are driving them away *in droves* because we are fighting the wrong fight. **We have to admit that we have to evangelize our culture, once again. We have to tell them, and, more importantly, show them the good news and good fruit of Jesus working in a human heart.**

Where are the men and women of God? Where are men and women whose lives cause others to take notice? Where are men and women who scandalize the culture by their love for one another, and for the "unlovely" and "unworthy"? Where are men and women who have a reputation for love and grace, instead of judgment? Where are people whose lives are different enough in positive ways that when they say that they are being led and empowered by God, people will believe that they indeed must be? Where are the followers of Christ who are recognized by their love? Where are those whose lives are so filled with the character qualities of the Spirit that people know it must be God, and have no real cause to speak against them? Where are those who feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, welcome the stranger and foreigner, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, and stand up for the weak and oppressed? Where are those who stand up for justice, and maintain the heart and attitude of Jesus? Where are those whose walk confirms their talk, instead of belies it? Where are those whose lives are so outstanding in righteous and good behavior that those who would criticize or malign them will be put to shame, even before unbelievers? Where are men and women whose lives demonstrate the activity of God, ...whose lives cannot be explained except by the reality that God is working in, through and around them?

You see, this is what we are called to. In both the Old and New Testaments, **God called out a people who were to be for Him. They were to be unique, noticeable. They were to be unlike other people.** The rendering of the Hebrew in the King James Version is that they were to be a "peculiar people". **They were to be set apart and dedicated to God as their King and Lord. He called them out from the other peoples so that He could accomplish His will through them. God desired to use them to show other people His character, ...His longsuffering patience, amazing mercy and grace, His loyal covenant love, as well as His holiness, justice, discipline and even His wrath against evil. He gave them His wise counsel, so that they could live in ways that would bring about health, blessing and prosperity among the nations. He intended that they be a positive witness, and showed them incredible grace.** He offered them forgiveness, provided for their needs, fought their battles, gave them health and blessings, and intended that they be a positive testimony to people all around the world. **In the OT, these blessings were mostly associated with the Jewish people, and were focused around the microcosm of their physical prosperity in the land of Israel. The dream of an OT saint was to live out his days in peace and righteousness, in prosperity on his family farm, each one under his vine and his fig tree.** He was to be faithful to God and "occupy until the Lord comes". **In the NT, the people of God were called from every tribe, tongue, people and nation.** The presence of God was to be seen in their lives wherever they lived or went, no matter the location. The provision and blessing of the Lord was not primarily a physical or materialistic blessing, anymore, though it did not exclude these. **The NT blessings were focused around the inner joy and triumphant, overcoming spirit of the heart. They were demonstrated not just in physical blessings but also in answered prayers, a patient, persevering faith in the face of trials and opposition, and a character that evidenced the reality of God in their lives.** Jesus said that the world would recognize they were His people by their love. The Christians truly understood that their inheritance was not here in this life. They were willing to spend their material goods, their time and energy for the Kingdom of God. There was an other-worldly quality about them. **The dream of a NT saint was to live in the power of the Holy Spirit, to demonstrate the reality of Jesus-in-me before the eyes of a watching world, so that people could come to know Christ for themselves.** You will find very little in the NT about family farms, or earthly inheritances. In fact, most of the references to these things refer to how it was necessary to be willing to give these up for the sake of knowing and following Christ. **The inheritance a true Christian is awaiting is a heavenly one. We are called to be aliens and strangers here, and to see ourselves as just passing through on our journey to a heavenly kingdom. Our job is to affect as many others as we can for Jesus, while we are here.**

Do you want to be a life-changer, a world-changer? God wants to use you to make a difference. His eyes search the earth for ones who are willing to yield to Him fully, that He might strongly support and demonstrate Himself in their lives (II Chron.16:9). **Don't be distracted from His calling on your life. He can do great things with you.**