

A Mission of Mercy

Luke 9:49-56; Coast Community Church; Pastor Earl Miles; December 11, 2016

If we were to try to ‘tweet’ the meaning of Christmas in one word, what might that be? There could be a number of good possibilities, but certainly one of the most important would be this:

‘Mercy!’

Mercy is why Jesus came! Christmas is God’s mission of mercy.

1. Opposition to the Outsider

⁴⁹ John answered and said, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us.” ⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, “Do not hinder *him*; for he who is not against you is for you.” – Luke 9:49-50

The disciples don’t like the fact that there are those who profess Christ and seek to do good in that name who are not a part of their group. Jesus lays down a principle that rebukes their thinking. Jesus says that we need not and should not oppose those who profess to be Christians and hold to the essentials of the gospel. This does not mean that we agree with all that they say and do but that we should not count them as our enemies.

Paul even rejoiced over those who preached the gospel with wrong motives. (Philippians 1:15-18)

‘Christ declares that we ought to reckon as friends those who are not open enemies.’ - Calvin

We need to be careful of narrow mindedness in the Church.

It is wrong to condemn those who aren’t a part of our clan or tribe or theological flavor or denomination or church. Do you ‘demonize’ other professing Christians because they are not ‘with you’ in certain ways?

2. Consumption of the Unbeliever

⁵¹ When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; ⁵² and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. ⁵³ But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. ⁵⁴ When His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” – Luke 9:51-54

Jesus requests to stay at a village in Samaria even though the Jews and Samaritans despised each other. Two key issues: race and religion: mixed marriages resulting in Jewish-pagan races and

mixed religion – Jewish-pagan religion with a competing worship center at Gerizim which was opposed to Jerusalem. Remember John 4: Jesus breaks two cultural codes with the woman at the well – don't speak to women and don't speak to Samaritans (beneath you to do so). Elijah called down fire from heaven to consume the soldiers sent from the king. The disciples thought they had biblical precedent for what they asked! (2 Kings 1:10-12) James and John were called 'the sons of thunder': James was an early martyr, the first of the disciples/apostles; John came to be known as the 'apostle of love'; they went back to preach in Samaria in Acts.

We need to repent of rejecting of those who reject Christ.

It is wrong to condemn those who reject us.

3. Rebuke of the Misloyal

⁵⁵ But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; ⁵⁶ for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."] And they went on to another village. – Luke 9:55-56

The disciples probably thought they were simply being loyal to God and Jesus and the truth. In reality, they were mis-loyal: they were showing their loyalty in a way that was disloyal to all that Jesus came to do! Jesus came to show mercy and save, not to condemn. Jesus condemned their condemnation of the Samaritans!

What kind of spirit is it? Galatians 5:20-21; 1 Corinthians 13:5-8; James 2:13; Matthew 5:7; Micah 6:8; Matthew 6:14-15; Luke 15:20; Psalm 86:15; 103:8; Jonah 4:2; Hebrews 2:17; John 3:17; John 12:47; Luke 19:10; Exodus 23:4,5; 2 Kings 6:21-23; Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:19-21; John 13:1-11; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

The spirit of Christmas and of Christ is to be as inclusive as we can be and as merciful as we can be.

We need to remember the spirit of Christmas: mercy to sinners.

There will be a time for justice but now is the time for mercy. (Romans 12:17-21)

Luke 2:10-11; Luke 2:28-32; Luke 1:78; Hebrews 2:9-18

Have you missed the 'big news of Christmas'?

- Are you resting in Jesus? Resting in His mercy?
- Are you hoping in God?
- Are you pursuing love? Showing His mercy?