

A Committed or a Contributor?

God wants those who are committed to his church

Picture with me if you will, our loving Heavenly Father sitting on his throne in heaven. He says that his people have sinned and turned against him into their wickedness. We read in Genesis 6:5 “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”

This loving God decides that he will sacrifice his one and only perfect and holy Son to pay the debt of our sins, He commits to it, Christ is incarnate, Christ is sacrificed in a way that denotes he is cursed and he does all of this for us.

Yet, in all ages of this generation we find a sense of entitlement and a missing sense of gratitude.

How often do we hear or say phrases such as:

- If it is convenient I'll come to church on Sunday morning
- Sunday night and Wednesday night are inconvenient for me
- I'll come to church if it doesn't interfere with my other plans
- I am too busy to commit to the churches mission
- I support the church with my finances, my time is my own
- and so on...

Jesus was all in for us...

My question this morning is do we as Christians in today's world understand the difference between a contribution (Time, Money, resources) to the church and commitment to the church?

When you have bacon and eggs for breakfast. The chicken makes a contribution, the hog is fully committed.

Commitment is more than just attending services on Sunday morning, it is a recognition that we are God's children and are subject to his will. Did you know that we are told to come to church and to actually encourage one another.

Hebrews 10:25: “And let us not neglect our meeting together as some people do, but encourage one another now that the day of his return is drawing near.”

There is a serious problem with commitment in society today.

Consider Paul's commitment, he stood up for the church and for Christ when others sought to kill him, they beat him and put him in prison and yet he stood for Christ. How about Stephen, he made a commitment and they stoned him to death.

Today it seems as though most commitment is situational. What I mean is that morality seems to be situationally dependent. We will do what is right and stand up for Christ only when it won't cost us anything.

This morning if Christianity were outlawed, how many Christians would still gather to worship the Lord and learn about his word?

I could go on. But what have we as a society lost?

Commitment

Don't believe me? Let's look at just the last 80 years.

Consider the number of marriages that wind up now in divorce.

- People commit for life, for better or worse, yet when the worse comes they bail
 - How many times have we heard of a woman giving birth to a child with a mental illness, a birth defect or other abnormality and the father walking out.
 - How many times have we heard of a woman or a man succumbing to lust and cheating on the partner to whom they swore a life commitment.
 - How many times have we heard the excuse, We fell out of love or our lives took different paths
 - When a man and a woman made a child out of wedlock in the past, there was a sense of morality and commitment to do what was right for the partner.
- Who here has ever hear the expression that a mans word is his bond.
 - When men committed to something it was a point of honour to follow through no matter what the cost.
- What happened to lying is wrong. I heard a politician the other day it was standard operating procedure.
 - The further we remove God and his principles from our lives the worse they will get
 - Prayer has been removed from our schools, kids are no longer taught to reverence God but are told that they come from monkeys. Is it any wonder people are starting to act in an unGodly manner?

Do we do what is right or what is convenient. Do have practice morality or situational morality.

- Do we have brother X coming to church on Sunday morning, saying Amen and Preach it; But on Saturday walking around at a biker party trying to put a toilet plunger that is placed between his legs in the centre of a toilet paper roll a woman has between hers.
- Do we hear Hallelujah on Sunday and curse words every other day of the week.

I see so many lives in ruin because of a lack of commitment. God wants us committed:

- He wants people to be committed to their commitments
- He wants people to be committed to their marriages (not in abuse)
- He wants people to be committed to their children
- He wants people to be committed to do what is right regardless of circumstance
- He wants people to be committed to serving him in their lives and in the churches
- He wants people to be committed to Jesus

He is committed to each of us... He told us clearly that he would never leave us or forsake us.

Are we committed to each other in the church?

The apostle Peter is a great example of the strength we have together. When he was surrounded by the other apostles he stood bold and strong, but when he stood alone he denied Jesus three time.

Jesus was committed to us. He gave his life for each of us.

This morning we must ask ourselves: Are we making a contribution to the church or are we committed. Sometimes in today's world it is even hard to get people to contribute of their time, money or resources.

I once heard a great illustration. Many of you know that I think of the church as a life boat and not a cruise ship. Well, there were some coast guardsmen at a coastguard station who were preparing to rescue two fishermen who had become lost in a storm. A man at the front desk who had just docked his fishing boat emphatically said to the preparing guardsmen: "Whatever you do, Don't go! You will never make it back." A guardsman turned to the man and said: "We don't have to get back, but we have to go..." The guardsman was fully committed to his task regardless of cost or circumstance.

We have read many times that without faith it is impossible to please God. But the problem is that in our society today with so many churches, pastors, charitable organizations and so forth being corrupt, embezzling money, being self-centred, paying 10 cents on the dollar to the actual cause and pocketing the rest as high paying salaries etc, that we as a people have become hardened and have in many cases lost our trust in the church, leaders and others, we have become cynical. When we have lost our trust we have truly lost it all, because all relationships must be built on a foundation of trust. Trust is the fundament element of Faith. Satans tactics has eroded Godly principle and trust within the church today.

Without trust and faith, people become self-centred and self-focused. An attitude of I can't trust anybody or anything but myself becomes almost unavoidable. All of which means that people will not commit to that which they cannot trust and for so many they have become so jaded that when there is something good, they habitually do not trust and so will not commit.

Folks before we as christians can commit to the ways of the Lord, we must commit ourselves. This is what it means to be saved. We are literally saved from sin and self. We are made to be new creations in Christ. So we need to break the strongholds that prevent us from trusting, we need to have faith.

In a nutshell, what you trust you will commit yourself to and conversely what you truly commit yourself to, you will trust.

So what?

When we commit our ways to God it really doesn't mean inactivity... it doesn't mean that you sit back and wait for God to do it all, what it does mean is to rest from our worry and prior negative experiences. As scripture tells us in Philippians 2:12 we need to work out our salvation with fear and trembling!. God know about the things that have happened in the church and he knows we may have fear, but we must trust God to superintend his servants and his church. We must put our faith in him to ensure that all things will work together for Good, for those who love him and are called according to his purposes.

Are we simply contributing to the church or are we committed to God and his work?

That said, let me be clear hear. Contribution of your time, money and resources to the church is of value and is appreciated. Commitment to God, each other, and the work of the Lord is the next step of faith and it pleases God. Finally, I must point out that we do not have a contract with Jesus we are

consecrated. We have a covenant with Jesus. A covenant is a blood oath that is not breakable. This morning as Christian brothers and sisters we must ask ourselves: Have we set aside our lives to God's will and purpose?

A Christian woman once asked her pastor what it means to be consecrated unto the Lord. I loved his response, it is clear and very accurate so I will share it with you this morning.

She said: "Pastor, what is your idea of what Consecration means?" The pastor held out a blank sheet of paper and said: "Consecration is like signing your name at the bottom of this blank sheet of paper as a covenant between you and God." The woman said: "But there is nothing on the sheet!" The pastor responded by explaining: "That is what Consecration is... it is to trust God completely and let Him fill in the sheet as he wills..."

Every day in our Christian walk, we have choices, those choices have two exit points. The first is fear, we can choose to fear as a result of previous bad experiences of fear of what could happen. This shows that there is no trust or faith in the decision. The second choice is faith. Faith that God is in charge and is real and is powerful. Faith that God will ensure that what is right to happen will happen and trust that no matter the outcome, God has it under control.

A lack of commitment comes down to a lack of trust and ultimately apathy and or pessimism. It is a fear response.

A committed response exemplifies trust and faith.

So many in churches today, hand over only a portion of their lives to Christ. They try to set up boundaries between themselves and their commitment to Christ. If you really want to see God move powerfully in your lives, you need to have faith in God and allow him to write your story with yourself

Without propagating fear, let me advise you that the church of Jesus is under persecution in the world today. One day it may come to Canada in a more overt form. What will happen to those who are only circumstantially committed when persecuted? Will their faith endure?

This is unpopular but turn with me to 2 Timothy 3:13-15

"Yes and all who desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse. Deceiving and being deceived. But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Not a pleasant thought... So what do we do?

We get committed and dedicate ourselves to understanding 2 Timothy 4:1-5 which tells us:

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will be the judge of the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching. For a time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside

to fables. But you be watchful in all things, enduring afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”

I am grieved as I witness churches not preaching about hell or repentance. I am grieved that they preach only what people want to hear. I believe that this is done to build big church buildings and bring in cash and resources. But what is the cost, people do not have sound doctrine and hang onto what sounds like a cool or interesting idea instead of the truth.

John Wesley said: “Give me 100 men who hate NOTHING but sin and LOVE God with ALL their hearts and I will shake the world for Christ!”

Now I know that many of you here this morning are hungry to see God’s power in the church. To see manifestations of great miracles. To partake of the presence of God in powerful revival. To see the lost and hurting in our area find hope.

The challenge today is to move out of our comfort zone. To avoid circumstantial commitment in favour of true commitment. To labour together in our community to see God’s will done and his kingdom established here in Salmo. Let’s us resolve to not fear the future, but rather embrace God’s plan and restorative work here. Let us press towards seeing the love of Christ suffuse Salmo.

We need to be all in...

Jeremiah 29:13

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.