

May 24, 2020

1 Corinthians 15:1-26, 51-57

I have often said that Christianity is a simple, uncomplicated and beautiful expression of faith in God. Christianity is built on three points or as I call them the three pillars of faith. They are: that Christ was crucified, Christ died and Christ rose from the dead. At face value they are not very complicated or difficult to understand. It is very basic and if you stick to the basics you cannot go wrong or stray too far from the faith.

These three pillars of the faith make up the basic diet for Christianity. Until you start adding the gravy which may not necessarily be needed. Mind you the gravy tastes good and helps the other stuff on your plate slide down. Yet if you had to, you could make do without the gravy. The gravy does dress up your plate. In the past people have been killed or alienated for the gravy they chose.

The gravy I speak about are the things that were added to Christianity after the three pillars of faith. As time went on believers asked about Our Lord's earthly origins and who His parents were. They had questions about His nature and being fully human and fully God. They asked about the miracles He performed during His earthly ministry. These were the questions that would dress up the story of Christ's earthly ministry and fill in the gaps. The three pillars of faith were the first things that truly defined the faith we still hold on to. They are almost like the weight watchers version of Christianity. This is what Paul presents this morning in our scripture reading.

The faith that Paul presents is strictly of the Risen Christ. It is the same experience he had of Jesus on the road to Damascus. It is not the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ that the four evangelists present. Paul lays the foundation of Christianity in these communities based on Christ crucified, Christ died and Christ

risen from the dead. It is a very simple creed that we still use today. We modified it slightly in our cranberry book in setting two on page 132. We express it as, Christ has died, Christ has risen and Christ will come again. Our modification is a bit more apocalyptic because He is coming back. Paul presents the first creed for Christianity expressed in the three pillars of faith. He wrote about these three pillars of faith before Mathew, Mark, Luke or John started to write about their personal experiences as disciples of Christ. Paul preaches about a risen and glorified Christ.

The three pillars of faith are very important because they contain the core of our faith. As I said earlier, if you stick to the three pillars it is very difficult to stray far from the faith. In the past there have been movements among the Muslims and Jews that stated that Jesus Christ was not crucified. They claim that it was His twin or someone that looked like Him. Yet Josephus and many Roman documents of that time talk about Jesus being crucified and having died. Here we have two independent sources that say the same thing. It put this controversy to rest. Some then claimed that He did not really die on the cross. The scriptural accounts of His crucifixion attest to the fact that Jesus was dead on the cross. The Roman centurion, Longenius attested to the death of Jesus. That is why they pierced His side to make sure He was dead. The presence of clear fluid and blood from His side indicated that He was dead and that His body was breaking down. The Gospel of John talks about how the Jews of the day started the rumor that His body was stolen by His disciples. If that was true how do you explain His appearances during the forty days after His resurrection?

Paul presents the weight watchers version of Christianity this morning. It is a very simple and uncomplicated faith based on the last three days of Our Lord's life. If you just stick to: Christ crucified, Christ died and Christ rose from the dead, you cannot go too far astray. Historically much of the gravy would be added when Christianity becomes the religion of the Roman Empire. Then things like the

immaculate conception, dates for Christmas, dates for Easter and fights over the nature of Christ would creep into the faith. The Roman Emperors would see the value of Paul's writings and make them the foundation of the faith. That is why Paul's writings are in our New Testament and not some of the wild Gnostic material. Paul presents a simple, beautiful and accurate account of the Christian faith in its early days. How it started and where the Holy Spirits has taken it is truly amazing. Christ's Bride is continually evolving and changing as a living entity.

God Bless, peace and sunshine, Pastor D