

“Are You a Do It Yourself Christian?”

Jesus said: “Remain in Me, as I also remain in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you, unless you remain in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who remains in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:4-5, Modern English Version)

Being a “self-made” person is something that is highly respected in American culture. For “rugged individualism” (a term coined by former President Herbert Hoover according to *Wikipedia*) is considered by many to be part of the fabric of the US – a country which has also been commonly described as “the land of opportunity.” I’ll leave the discussion to people smarter than myself about the degree to which a person’s success or failure in this world depends upon individual effort.

This month I wish to focus upon the question: “Are you a self-made, a do it yourself, Christian?” After all, doesn’t the Bible say that “God helps those who help themselves?” Well, no it doesn’t. This phrase is not in the Bible. And neither is the teaching that there are self-made, or do it yourself, Christians. In fact, theologians and church bodies preaching that human beings can help God a little bit in the act of conversion to Christianity are in error. For unbelieving sinners cannot cooperate with God or assist Him in any way when it comes to salvation – they cannot help even one billionth of one percent. For the Bible teaches that by nature every one of us is spiritually blind (1 Corinthians 2:14), dead (Ephesians 2:1), and an enemy of God (Romans 8:7).

My friends, as Holy Scripture clearly teaches, and as honest observation of the world in which we live clearly confirms, mankind has been separated from the Creator. Things in this world certainly aren’t as they ought to be. The cause is our sin. But our good works are unable to cancel out the debt of our sin – they are unable to reconcile us with our Maker whom we have gravely offended. Therefore, we cannot save ourselves by our own efforts. Yet, human philosophy and man-made religions direct us to do that very thing – namely, save ourselves. Thanks be to God that one religion, God’s religion, is telling us the truth and offering us real hope.

“For at the appointed time, while we were still helpless, Christ died for the ungodly. It is rare indeed that someone will die for a righteous person. Perhaps someone might actually go so far as to die for a person who has been good to him. But God shows his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:6-8, Evangelical Heritage Version).

See, God Himself is the only One who could rescue corrupt sinners and make them Christians. He sought out His fallen creatures to deliver them. His Son took our human flesh to stand-in for us – being born to a virgin named Mary. He kept the Ten Commandments for us and then sacrificed Himself in our place at the cross – being punished for all our sins and dying our death. And God’s Son Jesus Christ bodily rose again three days later.

And risen from the dead, Jesus still seeks out sinners. He comes through His Word and Sacraments – bringing the forgiveness, salvation, and new & eternal life that He purchased for mankind. He seeks out sinners – calling, washing, feeding, and sustaining them. He converts sinners into Christians and keeps them in saving faith until the day they enter paradise with Him. And He will lovingly provide for His Christians forever in the resurrection He has planned for His church.

My friends, a “do it yourself” approach may be very appropriate in certain areas of life in this world. But “do it yourself” simply won’t work for the sinner when it comes to life with God. For my fellow sinner, ***“as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it remains in the vine, neither can you [and I], unless [we] remain in [Jesus].”*** ***“For without [Jesus] [we] can do nothing.”*** Therefore, ***“if anyone does not remain in [Jesus], he is thrown away like a branch and withers. Such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned”*** (John 15:6, Evangelical Heritage Version). See, we are condemned, eternally condemned, without Jesus Christ. So, why would you or I ever want to be a “do it yourselfer” when it comes to God? Why would we ever purposely neglect hearing His Word or receiving His Supper? Who or what could possibly deserve our trust, adoration, and time more than our Savior, Jesus Christ?

So my fellow Christians, ***“remain in [Jesus], as [He] also [remains] in you.”*** For ***“[He is] the vine, you are the branches. He who remains in [Jesus], and [Jesus] in him, bears much fruit”*** and has life with God which shall never end.

See you at worship,
Pastor