Growing in Grace, Growing in Community -- Life Lessons on Maturity with the Corinthians

***Unity: The First Casualty of Immaturity --*** 1 Corinthians 1:10--2:5

**Tribalism*, noun, trib al ism, loyalty to a tribe or other social group especially when combined with strong negative feelings for people outside the group, strong in-group loyalty, (MWD)***

Whenever we feel the urge to resolve our conflicts or organize ourselves the world’s way (by choosing sides, pulling rank, manipulating, or playing identity politics) we should remember Paul’s plea to this immature church. Notice that he does not merely tell them, “Stop quarreling, stop choosing sides, stop acting superior to others.” And he never addresses the issues that divide them. Why? Because the issues are never the issue. Control is the issue. So, he explains that their common spiritual connection in the Body of Christ should translate into a moral and practical unity of mind and deed, a purposeful, thoughtful cooperation because of the radical Cross of Jesus. As the saying goes, “The ground is level at the foot of the Cross. . .”

❖ Jesus calls us to reject tribalism and in Him, be of one mind. 1:10 Because. . .

❖ Tribalism shows we are overlooking, and so, devaluing the person and work of Christ. 1:11-17

❖ Tribalism shows we have forgotten that God chose to save us through a demonstration of weakness (death on a cross), not strength, “foolishness” not (human) wisdom. 1:18-25

❖ Tribalism shows we have forgotten that we are saved in spite of who we are, not because of who we are. 1:26-31

❖ Tribalism shows we have forgotten that our faith rests upon God’s Word and power, not the “world’s wisdom” and the drive to control others. 2:1-5

**Growth Principle #2: The spiritually mature Christian rejects tribalism and passionately pursues unity with other true believers through the power and wisdom of God found in Jesus Christ.**

What is true wisdom, and what is its source? What is true power, and what is its source? Paul explains that God’s way of dealing with our deepest problems is NOT through power plays and shrewdness, but an honest humility that knows its limitations and admits its weakness. The Cross is the great example of this truth, and a model for us to follow. The world’s way is to force its “wisdom” upon others, “Win/Lose.” God’s method is to draw others into a loving cooperation of “win/win.” Replace childishness with childlikeness.

***What can we learn from Paul’s way of dealing with this immature church?***

***1. Unity demands constant self-evaluation.*** Quarrels are more about pride than issues, more about power than values, more about self than others. James 4:1-4 explains it well. Philippians 4:2.

***2. Unity involves a standard***. Unity is not peace at any price, nor elevating one over another, nor bland compromise. Rather, it is a conscious agreement to walk together according to the Gospel. Philippians 2:1-11 is the blueprint for our getting along.

***3. Unity involves every area of our lives:*** marriage and marketplace, school and society, family and neighborhood. In Christ, to lead is to serve. It is first of all, an attitude: Mark 10:42-45.

***4. Unity demands a break with the thinking of the world.*** Our culture is polarized by identity politics and demands for power. Jesus models a different way. Luke 22:24-30

***Going Deeper--For Growth Groups:***

1. True injustices do exist in our culture. There are genuine concerns in the areas of racial equality, immigration reform, and religious persecution that are not mere talking points. On the other hand, our culture tends to polarize people around their respective tribes, and fight. How can churches engage these issues without becoming embroiled in these foolish and unproductive fights? What can churches do to promote racial healing and cross-cultural understanding?

2. Have you noticed that people who are arguing most often are not listening to one another? How does our identity in Christ free us to listen, fully and intently and without judgment? How does having nothing to lose (as in our being crucified with Christ) help us serve those unlike us, without fear?