O A Great Offering

Jude 12-13

October 27, 2013

--Welcome to My Mind segment: Share my greatest challenges to pastoring

--time management = always more than can be done/always more to do

--measuring success = verses camp/quantifiable vs. unquantifiable

--people = campers for a week and they go home vs. long term

--I share that because our study in Jude this morning helps to measure the success of a church as well as your success as individual believers. Are we doing what God has called us to do? Are we succeeding to be what Christ has made us to be?

--last week we look at a pervasive problem, I would even call it a false teaching, that has turned much of contemporary Christianity into a me-focused faith.

Every week thousands of people arrive at church, come in sit down, sing the songs. They listen to a hopefully interesting and inspiring sermon and then leave without ever really connecting with anyone.

I’m not suggesting that they aren’t Christians or that there isn’t even an individual, personal application to the gospel. What I am saying is that as long as “me” is first, then Christ can’t be and that isn’t the gospel.

When you discover the power of the gospel you realize that it is about what He has done not about what I can do. It is about His obedience, not mine. It is His blood that cleanses me, not my intentions or motives.

With more and more churches catering to this self-mentality the church is in danger of losing the transcendent nature of our community that makes us entirely difference from other social clubs and organizations.

We mustn’t turn this into something about us. It is about Christ. We can’t desire experience more than knowledge. We can’t prefer our choices to God’s absolutes, our preferences over eternal truths, or make it about comfort rather than growth.

Because of this radical individualism American Christianity has created this false impression that as long as you and Jesus are alright, you can go to church alone. As long as you are okay with Christ, then that is all that matters.

But, my friends, this is a dangerous thought. Dangerous because we pretend that people can connect with Jesus while remaining disconnected from His body (Jason Johansen, “going to church alone”) which is a completely foreign thought to the New Testament writers.

They urged believers to never forsake meeting together. It was community that defined the early church. Acts 2:44 is sort of like the theme of the book: “Every day they continued to meet together and had everything in common.”

--illustration about lounge at Susque with each person on their device

--They were all together, but alone. Alone together

My friends you cannot have intimacy with Christ and remain detached from His body, from the church, you can’t be aloof and indifferent to the person sitting next to you, behind you, in front you, over there. What is to become of a community when people find their iphones more interesting that the person they are actually in the room with?

A dead guy that I haven’t referenced much is a F.B. Meyer, a brilliant English evangelist (dates on screen). He wrote,

“Man in his fall withdrew his nature from dependence upon God, and made himself a center of his own life and activity. He in essence became his own sunshine. And today this world is cursed because men and women are living for self.

What is the basis of all conflict. Self. And when everybody is focused on self, then nobody is looking out for others, and how can we live like that?

Myer wrote, that we are making hell on earth because hell is the affirmation of self to the exclusion of God. And whenever one is focused on self at the exclusion of God and others then we cannot be the body of Christ that we are called to be and we cannot accomplish what God has commissioned to do.

The prime cause of all failure in private life and in ministry is the assertion of self over God.

When we, like the false teachers in Jude’s day are only concerned with shepherding ourselves, caring for our needs, our interests, our desires, then we break the fellowship and community that is to define the church of Christ.

When we ignore our responsibility to those next to us, then our gatherings become empty and meaningless, our fellowship becomes like clouds that look like they should bring rain, but never deliver on their potential.

That is where we pick this week in Jude looking at verses 12-13. Go ahead and turn this morning as we look at the remaining four analogies that Jude used to describe the effect these false teachers had.

While you do that allow me to share a JBYOTOK fact. We all know that water is important to survival. About 70 percent of the Earth's surface is water-covered, and the oceans hold about 96.5 percent of all Earth's water.

Rain is one of those essential needs for any community to exist. Rain waters the plants, help the crops to grow, fills wells and streams so we have water to drink and it keeps temperatures from getting too hot. We can’t live without rain.

Does anyone know the world’s driest inhabited place (the key is inhabited)?

--Aswan, Egypt, the country’s sunniest and southernmost city.

--temperatures reach 114 degrees.

--home of the 12,565 foot high Aswan Dam

--however only .02 inches of rain falls a year (.5mm)

Imagine that this is where you live as I read to you our passage from Jude. (are you picturing it?)

12 These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

So there you are; sitting along the banks of the Nile. It is 110 degrees (show me what it looks like). And you see this big puffy nimbus clouds coming along the sky. And of course we all remember from Latin class that *Nimbus* is a [Latin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) word meaning cloud or rain storm. They are the clouds that bring the promised rain needed to sustain life.

However, Jude likens the false teacher to these clouds who do not bring water.

Remember, the 1st analogy was the false teachers being like a shallow reef or hidden rock. Although the false teachers appeared to be okay on the outside, in the heart they threatened to destroy the church fellowship by their selfish ambition.

The 2nd analogy is these fake rain clouds. They appeared to be nimbus clouds, they appeared to hold the promise of rain, but they blew over. They never delivered the needed rain.

The picture that Jude gives is that on the surface these men looked like they had the potential to bring great blessing to fellowship. They had great gifts to offer, but they never came through.

Because they were selfish and only looked after themselves, they were useless to the church family. They looked like they should have brought great life and energy to the church, but they weren’t concerned about the community.

They were alone. They weren’t interested in connecting with others, they didn’t want to use their gifts for the edifying of the church family—they only wanted to edify themselves.

The third analogy offers the same picture. Jude says the teachers were like autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted. The key to this analogy is that it is harvest time. Just like now.

Imagine an apple tree. In the spring they were loaded with blossoms. All summer long the leaves are green. The farmer comes at harvest expecting to receive lots of apples, but instead the tree is barren; without fruit.

He called them doubly dead because not only were they fruitless, but they are uprooted, dead at the very foundation. They couldn’t bear fruit because they were even receiving the nutrients and water needed to produce fruit. They weren’t connected to anything.

The false teachers produced no life-changing fruit, either in themselves or in others.

The central theme that Jude gives us is that promise without performance is useless. It doesn’t matter what the outward appearance is. It doesn’t matter how nice their words sound, our great their promises were. They didn’t deliver.

That is the problem with false teaching, even in the church today. Preachers can make things sound good. They can have large followings and sells lots of books, but in the end, they blow over leaving behind barrenness and error because they aren’t rooted in the truth. They aren’t receiving the nutrients they need.

Let’s apply this to our focus on the church. You can have for what is all intense and purposes a healthy looking church. Lots of people attending. Good budget. Lots of programs. But if they are not connected. If they are not serving others, then the church will not accomplish the mission for which Christ started the church. They will be fruitless, and worthy of God’s judgment.

That brings us to our next quality of an Ambassador.

Ambassador Quality #14 = Fruitful

An ambassador for Christ is one who not only appears to accomplish the task given him, but does so with God’s blessing and because he is connected to Christ and others he produces a rich harvest.

The church that is fruitful is one that is making a difference for Christ in their families, in their communities and around the world. They are fulfilling their calling to be light, salt and to be different by being different.

But look at the false teachers. Rather than producing fruit, they left behind a mess. Look at Jude’s fourth analogy. Verse 13. The apostle says they were like wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam;

We’ve been to the beach when there has been a storm and the waves were pounding the land and afterwards what do you find littered across the sand? Lots of seaweed, driftwood, all sorts of unsightly litter from the sea, strewn about all over.

The false teachers were doing the same. They were causing such havoc in the church, they were causing division and conflict, they were like a storm in their attitude and manners, that in the wake of their very presence they were leaving behind them this unsightly mess, littering the church with broken promises, doubt, accusation of hypocrisy and often hurt people.

That is the opposite of fruitfulness. Rather than strengthening the church, building up individuals, encouraging, reaching the lost, helping those in need, showing the love of Christ, they left destruction, emptiness, & brokenness.

In the fifth analogy Jude expands the danger that these teachers were for the church. He writes that they were, wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.

Back before there were GPS and Google maps, people navigated by the stars. Early on people realized that there were patterns to the stars and could be used to provide direction.

However, the false teachers weren’t like the stars, they were like wandering objects, perhaps a reference to planets which didn’t rotate in the pattern as the stars. Some suggest that it could comets that fly across the sky and disappear.

Whatever the actual reference Jude had in mind, the results are the same. False teaching can’t be a guide for life. A false gospel doesn’t provide a moral compass, it doesn’t give you what you need to live a fruitful and productive life for Christ.

False teaching is like navigating by a wandering star…You will be off course, wandering, zigzagging and off the path of righteousness. And Jude reminds us that judgment is reserved for these people who have caused the church to drift off course, to lose its moral guidance.

So how does a Church or people who are trapped by the false gospel of self, break free? How do we begun fruitful? How can we fulfill the potential that we have in Christ?

Let me offer you three quick steps to overcoming self and living a fruitful and productive Christian life.

First, the cross. We must start here because only the cross can root out the sin of selfishness. Fruitfulness does not start with doing more. Fruitfulness does not begin with praying more, serving more, reading your bible more.

In fact fruitfulness doesn’t begin with you at all. It begins with Christ at the cross where your sin was atoned, where it was nailed to the cross. Fruitfulness begins inside you with the change from the self-life to the Christ-life.

Listen to Romans 8:3-4. 3 The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.

And in that body God declared an end to sin’s control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. 4 He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit.

On the cross God nailed in the person of Jesus the likeness of our sinful flesh, that is he became sin for us. As Christ hung on the cross, my sin hung with him.

O the wonderful cross, Bids me come and die and find that I may truly live.

I don’t want to oversimplify the struggle that we have in living the Christian life, but all of our failures and weaknesses can be traced to this one fundamental truth—we have never fully given our self-life to Christ.

God has nailed it to the cross, but we still carry our burden with us. We trust Christ to remove our sin, to put it away, but we’ve never trust Christ to deliver us from ourselves. WE don’t trust Him with our lives, only our sin.

Give Christ this morning everything. Give him your life. Give him your self. And along with it give him your burdens, your worries, your health, your finances, your family, your career, your ambitions, give him your ministry and your church Give him all.

And if you are like me and you struggle to let go, then let this be your prayer: Lord I cannot give it, but if you would take it, you can have it.

And if you are not yet willing to even pray that, then may you pray, Lord I am not willing, but I am willing to be made willing.”

I had you last week think about where you tend to be most selfish and when that occurs I want you to remember that the cross stands between you and it and then remember this second point:

The Holy Spirit lives within you. Again fruitfulness isn’t about your trying harder and doing more, it is letting the HS work in you and through you and for you.

That is why Paul repeatedly said things like, walk in the spirit, be led by the spirit, live in the spirit because while you are walking and being led and living in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit then will begin bearing fruit in you b/c the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience…

It is the Spirit that wars against our flesh, our self-life enabling us to bear the fruit that God has prepared for us.

And finally, the foundation of Christian fruitfulness, that is delivering the potential that we have inside of us because of Christ, is doing all of it for Christ.

This is where the self-life can emerge must unexpectedly. We serve Christ and serve others and all of the sudden the motive and the thought comes, wow, I’m looking good. Look at what I’m doing. I;m praying more and I’m doing more and wow God must love me more.

When those thoughts come my friends dwell upon Christ. Meditate upon His mercy. Contemplate His grace and goodness. Remember his love for you. Know that all that we do for Him. For his glory.

When those thoughts come fall back to Him. Lean upon Him. Trust in Him. Confess to Him.

It is when we are trusting in Christ alone, living for Christ alone, relying upon Christ alone that we will find that Christ is pleased to produce the fruit that He has born within us.

It is a false gospel that thinks that Christ just enables you to transform yourself and our world. The focus remains on us and our activity rather than on God and His work in Jesus Christ. Try hard and do more is not the gospel.

No my friends. That is a false gospel, because even our fruitfulness relies upon Christ in us. We just need to let him have it all. To give up self and receive Christ.

Take my life Lord and let it be yours. If you have never done that, then today is a great day to do it.

--you’ve given your sin to Christ before, but never yourself

--you’re trusting in Jesus for your salvation, but not for your life,

--let’s pray