

Christianity – A Force for Good

Scripture: 2nd Timothy 2:19 – 21

In 2nd Timothy is a description of a formal and conventional Christian. A formal and conventional Christian hold the form of godliness but they deny the power of God. They keep the form of religion but do not want to have anything to do with the driving force of Christ.

This describes many people including some sitting here or watching this service virtually. In the USA we have over 80 million members of Christian Churches but our country still has many conditions within our borders that should not exist! We have poverty, a homeless problem, and many policies that show no love and compassion for other people. We seem to have accepted Christianity as a form but not as a force!

It is easy to understand this about the American Christian: first, we are not pagans! We are influenced by our Christianity heritage and the long history of our Christian upbringing has become part and parcel in us so that we know what the Christian faith is all about. But we have altered this history and faith to create a religious group who has lost sight of the main teaching of Jesus – Love and Compassion!

We now have a group called 'Christian Nationalism' who have taken Jesus' message of love and compassion upon ALL the people and they have put limits on who we call 'ALL people' to be. At our General Assembly in Louisville KY we passed overwhelmingly a business item that opposed 'Christian Nationalism'. We must never limit who we call 'ALL people'!

Second, we are not, on the whole, antagonistic to Christianity but we are respectful and even reverent toward it and we are grateful that it is here. However, a large group of us are ignorant to teaching of Jesus. We are opposed to it and we are complacent towards it. We have a form of religion but have nothing to do with the force of Christianity. We have become immune to the power of Christ!

Today, this kind of conventional Christianity confronts a challenging culture that listens to the loudest voice in the room and it should concern us all. For the present condition of our country and our world seems to be a form, not a force.

So what force is needed? Christianity must become a vital force. Christianity must become a dynamic force. And Christianity must become a sacrificial force.

We cannot meet a force with a form. It will take a dynamic force to conquer hatred in our country and world. It will take Jesus Christ to save us!

Christianity must become a force to meet the needs of our country and the world. One major reason that Christianity has become a conventional form, not a force, is because we are so concerned with our needs that we overlook the needs of others! Christianity has not become a dynamic reality for us, we need to wake up to the need for it and we need to discover it as a way to give us the power and resources to do Christ work.

Christianity must become a force in our lives and in our country, and in our world. So let us make Christianity not a form, but a force for good in our country and in the world. May Christianity become a dynamic power in our lives where it can become strong and organized. May Christianity involve fellowship and may it fight the forces of evil. The forces of evil are too strong to be fought by an individual, but they can be conquered by organized individuals with a common purpose to share love and compassion upon all people. Christianity needs men and women jointly devoted to nobler ends and the church can be such an institution!

A day is coming when we will observe a religious movement in the world today. In both structure and form, the church will become an organized force for good!

During Saturday night worship service at General Assembly Major Owen Chandler, an Army chaplain, husband, and father of three girls spoke. Let me share a story he told – Chaplain Chandler was assigned to the 1st Infantry Division as a Brigade Chaplain. This Brigade is the oldest Brigade in the Army.

Chaplain Chandler delivered a powerful message to us! When he started in this position, he has several other chaplain under him, he first had a meeting with brigade commander. When he entered the brigade commander's office he noticed how decorated it was with pictures of officers who had died in combat from the battalion. The commander also had citations he had received on another wall and on his back wall of his office, he had the battalion colors and flags. And finally on his large desk he had pictures of his family. The commander ask Chaplain Chandler to have a seat. They talked for almost an hour with the commander sharing his thoughts on what he expects out of the brigade.

When the commander decided to close the meeting, he came out from behind his desk and stood right in front of Chaplain Chandler. He ordered him to stand and then he shared these final words of wisdom. He said he has shared this with everyone under his command within the 1st Infantry Division. He said – the first thing to do is do what is right, then do the next right thing, and then the rest of the stuff will take care of itself!

Of course Chaplain Chandler told us that the commander did not use the word ‘stuff’, but he wanted to keep his message ‘G’ rated – not ‘R’ rated!

Chaplain Chandler went back to office and he prepared for a meeting that he was going to have with the chaplains under him the next day. He read from the Gospel of Luke, his go to book in the Bible and he prayed.

The next day Chaplain Chandler met with the chaplains under him in the brigade. The meeting took almost an hour and at the end of this meeting, he shared this wisdom with them. He stood up behind his desk and looked at every chaplain in the room. He shared – Love first, Love always, and the rest of the stuff will take care of itself!

Let me repeat these wonderful words of wisdom - Love first, Love always, and the rest of the stuff will take care of itself!

This was Major Chaplain Chandler orders to his chaplains and this was his orders to all 3,000 + Disciples in the hall. This is my command to you - Love first, Love always, and the rest of the stuff will take care of itself!

My friends, we must make Christianity a force! We must feel deeply for the needs of the marginalized and needy. The times we live in are crying out to us to become, not a form, but a force for Christ!

So today, think about how we can make Christianity a force for good and share your thoughts with me and others in our congregation. Let us become a force for good and a force for Christ!

And let us always - Love first, Love always, and the rest of the stuff will take care of itself!