

Doctrine into Life, Pt. 5

Doctrine in the Life and Ministry of the Church 10:30 AM Tuesday, January 11, 2011

If essential doctrine is essentially grounded in the narrative of the incarnate savior's work, then turning doctrine into life is fundamentally about being more and more linked to Jesus.

Doctrine into Life may be as simple and as difficult as doing what we do but more intentionally in the name of Jesus, that is, consciously connected to his past, present and future, with clearly articulated links by leadership.

1) Christ Saves Us by His Whole Life (Calvin, *Institutes* 2.16. 5, 19.

Now someone asks, How has Christ abolished sin, banished the separation between us and God, and acquired righteousness to render God favorable and kindly toward us? To this we can in general reply that he has achieved this for us by the whole course of his obedience.... In short, from the time when he took on the form of a servant, he began to pay the price of liberation in order to redeem us....

We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ [Acts 4:12]. We should therefore take care not to derive the least portion of it from anywhere else.

- If we seek salvation, we are taught by the very name of Jesus that it is “of him” [1 Corinthians 1:30].
- If we seek any other gifts of the Spirit, they will be found in his anointing.
- If we seek strength, it lies in his dominion;
- if purity, in his conception;
- if gentleness, it appears in his birth. For by his birth he was made like us in all respects [Hebrews 2:17] that he might learn to feel our pain [cf. Hebrews 5:2].
- If we seek redemption, it lies in his passion;
- if acquittal, in his condemnation;
- if remission of the curse, in his cross [Galatians 3:13];
- if satisfaction, in his sacrifice;
- if purification, in his blood;
- if reconciliation, in his descent into hell;
- if mortification of the flesh, in his tomb;

- if newness of life, in his resurrection;
- if immortality, in the same;
- if inheritance of the Heavenly Kingdom, in his entrance into heaven;
- if protection, if security, if abundant supply of all blessings, in his Kingdom;
- if untroubled expectation of judgment, in the power given to him to judge.

In short, since rich store of every kind of good abounds in him, **let us drink our fill from this fountain**, and from no other. Some men, not content with him alone, are borne hither and thither from one hope to another; even if they concern themselves chiefly with him, they nevertheless stray from the right way in turning some part of their thinking in another direction. Yet such distrust cannot creep in where men have once for all truly known the abundance of his blessings.

2) How do we make these links, deepen this union?

- Grab hold of that for which we have been laid hold (Phil 3: 12)
- Access the power (Eph 1: 19-20)
- For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. (Col 1: 29)
- We grab hold of Christ with both hands, as Calvin says, when we draw on him by faith, when we appropriate the truths of the Scriptures, access the power, engage in his work relying on him, abide in the vine.
- Abide in the vine. John 15

Newbigin on Fruit and Abiding:

This fruit is not an artifact of the disciples; it is the fruit of the vine. It is the life of Jesus himself reproduced in the lives of the disciples in the midst of the life of the world...the fruit is love and obedience....

But it is necessary to "abide" in Jesus, and this means a continually renewed action of the will. It is the continually renewed decision that what has been done once for all by the action of Jesus shall be the basis, the starting point, the context of all my thinking and deciding and doing...but 'the loyalty demanded is not primarily a continual being *for*, but a being *from*; not the holding of a position but an allowing oneself to be held' (Lesslie Newbigin, *The Light Has Come*)

Jesus' own love and obedience becomes ours, as we are connected to the vine. The fruit of our lives is his humanity expressed through ours. Our role is agreeing to stay connected. And enacting that connection intentionally, in reliance on him, yes, but with our whole hearts and lives engaged in worship, body life and mission.

Worship

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, every tongue confess”

Christ Exalting Songs

Prayers of praise that are Trinitarian and Christo-centric

Baptism as union with Christ

Frequent communion as *communion with Christ*

Time of Offering that stresses union with Christ

Spoken/sung professions of faith that exalt Jesus

Posture

Pastoral prayers that link to the intercessions of Jesus

Benedictions that evoke covenant and communion

Body Life

“Greater love has no man..than that he lay down his life for his friends”

“ I die daily”

Cultivation of life on life in pastoral care, fellowship, small groups.

Hospital and bereavement ministry

Celebrations: recognition of life events

Encouragement of Family Life: marriages and parenting, quiet lives.

Encouragement of all decent work as sacred not secular, as “For thy sake”

Teaching on Time

Ordinary Discipline:

Enacting the signs of belonging: students, servants, sowers, stewards

One on ones

Elder study

Prayer meetings

Extraordinary Discipline: in the context of prior relationship and future

Restoration.

Robust stewardship via shared ministry

Gathering the lost and wandering

Education that is ever centered on the Big Story and its key chapters

Mission

“What you did to the least of these my brothers you did to me.”

“Seek the shalom of the city in which I have placed you”

“When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said, “Do not weep,” then he raised the boy from the dead (Lk. 7)

Jesus looked, Jesus felt, Jesus acted.

Looking at our communities.

Feeling compassion.

Acting where need presents: hands on, in the name of Jesus.

Missional church, as church living on behalf of the lost.

3. Worship Ideas

a) Eastern Orthodox prayer tradition

“As you were present there, so likewise be present here.” (*Service Book*, 295)

It is only through an ever-renewed and ever-attentive contemplation of the life of our Savior that we will at least perceive some reflection of the mystery of Christ.”

(Catherine Aslanoff, *The Incarnate God*, vol.1, p. 11).

Eastern Orthodox tradition skillfully links identification with characters in the Bible to present-day worshippers. Gives the Scriptural stories their full integrity as events that occurred once and for all in space and time. Simultaneously, recognizes that in the mystery of the communion of saints, these characters are still available to us. Our lives can be shaped by theirs.

In worship and prayer, the distance is transcended.

Anamnesis: remembering in such a way that the power of the past event becomes present. Catherine Aslanoff writes:

Prayer and worship “make a commemorated event present: to make real today what happened 2000 years earlier....We are not simply reliving an event in the past, which occurred in the time of Pontius Pilate. We enter rather into God’s time, into his eternity. Through the Holy Spirit, the past becomes present. The triumphal entrance of Jesus Christ takes place today, and we participate in this encounter.

Each time that Jesus acts on earth, each gesture he makes becomes an inexhaustible spring, surging with eternal life. At every instant, the Holy Spirit actualizes the life of Christ and transmits it to the Church. The Church is both the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ, in which divine blood flows eternally to give life to all its members. (*The Incarnate God* , vol. 2 71)

This is particularly experienced when we worship and partake of our union with Christ in the sacrament of communion. Aslanoff goes on to say:

Indeed the eucharist allows us to escape chronological, historical time, the succession of days, hours and minutes. It allows us to live everything at once: the past, the present and the future. For liturgical time is not subject to linear time. It allows us to enter the eternity of God, where ‘the past, the present and the future somehow mysteriously coexist, where the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ meet one another. This is why we call the eucharist “the divine liturgy” for it is already a participation in eternal life in God.

Points of contact: emotion and circumstances.

If we can enter the story in connection to a character, we can be moved along, and thus transformed, as they were.

1. Centurion and Servant

“Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof . Therefore, only say the word, and my servant will be healed” (Lk. 7: 6-7).

Words before the Eucharist in Anglican and Catholic rites:

“Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word and I shall be healed.”

2. Jesus in house of Simon the Leper

Orthodox Prayer: O Lord my God, I know that I am not worthy nor sufficiently pleasing that You should come under the roof of the house of my soul, for it is entirely desolate and fallen in ruin and You will not find in me a place worthy to lay Your head. But as you did humble yourself from on high for our sake, so now humble yourself to my lowliness.....

You did not disdain to enter and to eat with sinners in the house of Simon the leper, so now be pleased to enter into the house of my soul, humble and leprous and sinful. (*Divine Liturgy*, 93-4).

3. The kiss of the sinful woman (Lk. 7)

And as Thou didst not cast out the prostitute, the sinful woman who came to touch Thee, so have compassion on me a sinner who comes to touch Thee. And as Thou didst not abhor the kiss of her sin-stained and unclean mouth, do not abhor my mouth, worse-stained and more unclean than hers....(*Divine Liturgy*, 94)

Identification in Profession

Geordie Ziegler, doing a riff on a passage from *Jesus Ascended*, riffing on Calvin:

So yes, this body of mine is failing, and people I love are fading. **But what of it? I am included** in One Who is already in heaven and who has already secured eternal life.

And yes, the church at large fails in its witness. Its worship is unimpressive. We seem indistinguishable from the world and truth is everywhere muted and blunted. **But what of it? We are included.** The man Jesus is the Lord Christ, who reigns over all the kings of the earth. His truth will triumph. **We are included.**

Yes, my prayers are weak and my worship is halfhearted. My faith is full of doubt and I give into sin daily. **But what of it? I'm included!** In my name and on my behalf a man appears before the Father. He is there, still in skin and *he* prays and *he* worships perfectly and **you and I are included in that man.**

Terror threatens, immorality runs rampant, the world is a harder place to be every day. **But what of it? We are included.** *This same Jesus* who reigns will return. *He* will set all things right. And you and I, *we*, are a part of his setting all things right. **We are included!**

CONCLUSION:

Now there are certainly things we can do to make this reality of our inclusion in Christ real in our experience, two things in particular: we can confess it and live it – like two pedals of a bicycle, one directly influences the other.

1. We can confess it – speak truth to ourselves and to one another.
2. We can renounce ourselves, abandon our own futile attempts to find life apart from Christ, and we can obey the living Christ in all aspects of our life.

I don't know any other reality that would both fill us with an *indestructible confidence* and yet at the same time a *profound humility*.

You have died – stop trying to find life in yourself –
your life is now hidden with Christ in God –

Let's do the first of these together right now. Please stand as together we say the Apostle's Creed, reminding ourselves that what is Jesus has done, he has done for us and in our name. So I invite you, after every phrase of the creed, to join me in saying, "We are included."

Apostles Creed (words on screen)

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.**

WE ARE INCLUDED

**I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,**

WE ARE INCLUDED

born of the Virgin Mary,

WE ARE INCLUDED

**suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;**

WE ARE INCLUDED

He descended to the dead.

WE ARE INCLUDED

On the third day He rose again;

WE ARE INCLUDED

He ascended into heaven,

WE ARE INCLUDED

He is seated at the right hand of the Father,

WE ARE INCLUDED

and He will come to judge the living and the dead.

WE ARE INCLUDED

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

WE ARE INCLUDED

the holy catholic Church,

WE ARE INCLUDED

the communion of saints,

WE ARE INCLUDED

the forgiveness of sins,

WE ARE INCLUDED
the resurrection of the body,
WE ARE INCLUDED
and the life everlasting.
WE ARE INCLUDED
Amen.
WE ARE INCLUDED
Amen

Doctrine into Life:

Keying the Questions to the Life of Jesus

What does the Son of God's being born of Mary have to do with the way the Body of Christ regards the unborn, young children, and the very elderly?

What does Jesus' suffering under Pontius Pilate have to say about the ordinary suffering of life under forces and powers too big for our control? To the church in times of government persecution? To the church concerning those imprisoned?

What does the death and burial of Jesus have to do with the funerals we conduct? What does it have to do with ministry to the grieving? With our expectations amidst prosperity gospels about what life is really like?

What does the descent into hell say about the church's ministry to the farthest off, the most overlooked, the least worthy? To those who have experienced abandonment?

What does the resurrection mean for those who have lost jobs, failed at marriages, watched their children rebel, seen the powerful and connected slam doors in their faces?

What present identity does the location of Jesus in heaven give to his people? What vocation?

What does his present ministry teach the church about the importance of prayer?

What does his promised return say to our obsessions with sports standings? Stock market reports? Entertainment news? Technology addiction?

St. Patrick's Breastplate (8th century, trans. C.F. Alexander)

I bind unto myself today
The strong Name of the Trinity,
By invocation of the same
The Three in One and One in Three.

I bind this today to me forever
By power of faith, Christ's incarnation;
His baptism in Jordan river,
His death on Cross for my salvation;
His bursting from the spic'd tomb,
His riding up the heavenly way,
His coming at the day of doom
I bind unto myself today.

Alternate:

I arise today
Through a mighty strength, the invocation of the Trinity,
Through the belief in the threeness,
Through confession of the oneness
Of the Creator of Creation.
I arise today
Through the strength of Christ's birth with his baptism,
Through the strength of his crucifixion with his burial,
Through the strength of his resurrection with his ascension,
Through the strength of his descent for the judgment of Doom.