

Living The Anointing

Catechism Lord's Day 12

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It's a frightening thing - I went into the grocery store the other day, just to pick up a few things. Turned out to be about half a cart full, and admittedly there were a few high price items in there - a bit of meat, laundry soap and the like. Came to the checkout and I was presented with a bill of close to \$200.

The sad thing is that isn't at all unusual. Well, you know that. You run into the same thing. Whatever happened to the days when \$25 would fill your grocery cart?

A dollar just doesn't buy what a dollar bought 20 years ago. It has been greatly devalued.

Unfortunately, our dollar isn't the only thing that has been devalued. Devaluation has also hit our faith.... at least a great part of it has. Specifically, I'm referring to the value that is placed on the meaning of the word, of the title, "Christian."

The true sense of what that word - a powerful word, a dangerous word when fully used - the true sense has been lost.

As we remember in churches around the world today, carrying this name has had many people killed. It is a threatening name.

And it is a name that changes lives.
With full value it can do nothing less.

Hear the Catechism, and the Word of God.

1 JOHN 2.20-27 P.239 (NT)
HEIDELBERG CATECHISM Q/A 32 (on screen)

The dangerous word - Christian.

I said that today that name has been badly devalued. How?

It is devalued when it is associated with church affiliation, or family heritage. I go to church. My membership is in a church. I contribute to a church. Therefore I am a Christian.

What I am really saying then is, "I am a Church-ian."

Which is much different.

Much weaker.

Much cheaper.

To be a Christian.

The Catechism calls us back to the heart of it.

The big news, old news that in today's climate is new once again, is that being a Christian is being linked to Jesus Christ.

It is being one with him - sharing his name, sharing, in a very real way, his identity, and sharing His mission.

A Christian is one who receives Christ, shares in Christ's Spirit, and then walks **out** of the Church, rather than hiding within it.

She walks **out** of the church and into the world to do the Christ-like work of being a prophet, priest and royal ambassador.

Of course, the Church is part of that work.

Our link to Jesus Christ - a link that 1 John 2 calls us to hold fast when it exhorts "remain in him" - is a link that in a very tangible way is strengthened and played out through association with the church of Jesus. The Bible pulls no punches in its call to believers to live together, work together, and worship together.

To be a Christian - Notice, please, the two basic divisions into which 1 Jn 2 divides the human race - with Christ

or

against Christ - that's *antichrist*.

Those with Christ, acknowledging Christ, have the Father, and they have eternal life. They also have something which 1 Jn 2 refers to as "an anointing."

To be a Christian is to be an anointed person.

Which ought to be no real surprise - except when old news is new again.

Literally, "Christian" means follower of Christ.

Christ, *Christos*, is the Greek word for "Anointed One."

So, to be a christian, then, is to be a "follower of the Anointed One."

And, says John, as a follower of the Anointed One, you are also anointed!

Jesus, after being anointed with the Holy Spirit at his baptism, entered into a three-fold office.

He was the Great prophet bringing us God's Word.

He was the great priest bringing sinful people to God.

He was the great king carrying God's rule into our lives and pushing back the influence of the Kingdom of Satan.

We share that Mission.

It's the Mission that St.Luke's 4th chapter relates to us in very simple, clear terms. Standing in the synagogue, Jesus unrolls the scroll of Isaiah and reads:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come.... This Scripture has come true today before your very eyes!"

You can put whatever spin you want on that, but a quick scan of Jesus' life showed that this is EXACTLY what He was about.

He rubbed shoulders with the poor, feeding them.

He sat to dinner with those that others pushed away.

He chased the extortionists out of the temple.

He condemned the political oppressors.

He proclaimed the coming of the Lord's shalom in declaring the forgiveness of sins.

He healed the sick.

It was spiritual.

And it was physical.

Not either-or.

It was both-and.

How sad that too often today Christians argue for one or the other.

They argue that the Church must be in the spiritual business of saving souls.

Or they argue that it should be in the physical business of relieving hunger.

Half right on both counts.

For saving souls is a very physical business.

And challenging oppression is deeply spiritual, as we do it in the name of the Creator and Saviour of the Universe,

the Word that became flesh and dwelt among us.

We are Christians.

We carry that anointing.

A royal anointing - ruling on behalf of God.

A liturgical anointing - bringing God's healing.

A proclaiming anointing - spokespersons for God.

As Prophet - "to confess his name"

As Priest - "to present myself to him as a living sacrifice of thanks"

As King - "to strive with a good conscience against sin and the devil in this life, and afterward to reign with Christ over all creation for all eternity".

I am anointed as prophet, priest and king.

YOU are anointed - be you old or young, male or female, rich or poor, business executive or plant worker.

The mission of Jesus has become your mission.
And the authority with which he worked is now the authority with which you work!
That is what it means to be a Christian.
The only other option, says 1 John 2, is the option of joining antiChrist.

All of which means, when the rubber hits the road, that "Christians are people who have a job to do, a mission to accomplish.... We aren't merely clerks, computer operators, factory employees, teachers, students, homemakers, carpenters and whatnot.

"And life is not merely about eating, drinking, mating, growing old, seeing the doctor, paying the bills, keeping going until we are finally let down into a hole, six by three feet. Jesus saved us from this kind of slow death; Christ appointed us to another style - Life is for us the fulfilment of our calling, struggling to live out the mission of Jesus."

You do all your living lined up on one side or the other of a very basic divide that runs clear through society -
For Christ - *Christian*
Against Christ - *Antichrist*.

Be you a carpenter, teller or homemaker you are dedicated to God, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a PROPHET; to let your life be one living Word that spells out the message of the Gospel through word and deed.

Be you an engineer, teacher, or unemployed you are dedicated to God, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a PRIEST; to be one who represents God to a lost world and who brings prodigal sons and daughters to a confrontation with their Waiting Father.

Be you retired, an electrician, or an officeworker you are dedicated to God, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a KING or QUEEN; to boldly confront the powers of darkness that challenge the Church and that seek to inject chaos and despair into society, to confront those powers in the authority of Jesus Christ and demand that they leave - be those powers that are affecting and distorting the life of an individual or the patterns of our society.

In that anointing, then, we have spent the last number of weeks reflecting on *The Micah Challenge*.

We've been reminded of the Lord's passion for justice and mercy.

It's a passion reflected in the prophet Isaiah - 58:6-12:

Remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor. Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear, and do not refuse to help your own relatives. Then my favour will shine on you like the morning sun, and your wounds will be quickly healed. I will always be with you to save you; my presence will protect you on every side. When you pray, I will answer you. When you call to me, I will respond.

We could speak in a benevolent, humanitarian way.
And it would be positive.

But far deeper and richer when we come at this task prayerfully, recognizing our identity in it, and seeking the blessing and power of Him who gave us that identity in the first place.

This week we bring our focus on the *Micah Challenge* to a conclusion.
I'm going to show the video with which we began our project.
As we do, consider - how would Jesus view the challenges that we see?

And how might He respond?

How can we do otherwise?

The video is called "*Grace*."

It is based on a Latin American prayer often said before a meal.

Hence the title.

The words of the grace in English are:

God bless this bread

Give bread to those who are hungry

Give hunger for justice to those who have bread

God bless this bread.

In the video, the words are sung in Swahili, Spanish, French and English to represent the community of our world.

Listen.

Watch.

And meditate.