

InterVarsity Graduate & Faculty Ministries Conference 2007
The power of the gospel to save: Inviting people into the Kingdom
The community of Christ as incarnational witness

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1.0 Recap from yesterday

Evangelism as people seeing who Jesus is
Jesus reveals different aspects of himself in different circumstances
In the passages we looked at at the end of his journey to Jerusalem, Jesus is seen as
Full of truth himself and expecting the truth from others
Unafraid of conflict and able to take care of himself
Loving and merciful
Demanding and self-sacrificing
Authoritative and humble
Worthy of our trust
Seeing the best in us, wanting the best for us, longing to celebrate with us, grieving every loss

2.0 How does the world see Jesus today?

We do not now see Jesus in the flesh--his resurrected body is no longer physically with us
Any one of us will fall considerably short as we present Christ-in-us as a picture of Jesus
As Paul says, "And who is equal to such a task?"
This is one of our major stumbling blocks to evangelism--we are so conscious of our failings
I am proposing that in thinking this way we do not understand the Scriptures well enough
Christ is incarnate not so much in me, or you, individually, but in the whole of the Church

3.0 The crisis of word, truth, and evidence

In our postmodern epistemological environment, talk is worse than cheap
Language emptied of meaning (Derrida); language as the action of power (Foucault)
So, words are unpersuasive. It was that way for Jesus and the apostles, sometimes, too
(that's why the miracles--nonverbal, physical, empirical testimonies to the truth)
But I'm not proposing a Wimberian power evangelism--something more everyday & persuasive:

The pursuit of genuine Christian community shows the world who Jesus is and is thereby strong gospel.

4.0 Why propose this?

Jesus, in the high-priestly Upper Room prayer, talks about it
John 17:20 ff: our unity, and love for one another, are essential to we being in Christ
"They may be completely one so that the world may know that you have sent me and have
loved them even as you have loved me."
Jesus wanted others to see him, so that they could know God. This is now the church's job.
It's not an individual's job, primarily.
The job of the individual is to pursue a life of authentic Christian community.

5.0 Why would this be a good thing?

First, we are all inadequate to the call of Christlikeness by ourselves

Second, it is true to the Scriptures' testimony.

Christ in the body (*incarnatus*) is God's revelation (cf. John 1, Hebrews 1)

the Body (*soma*) of Christ is also intended to reveal Jesus and the Trinity

Third, it provides a concrete way in which we can pursue revealing Christ and a support system for that task.

Let's unpack this.

6.0 Paul's vision of the church in Romans and its relationship to Jesus' self-revelation

Much of what we know about how authentic Christian community should be is in epistles

For a reasons of economy I'll concentrate here on part of Romans (chapters 12-13)

Will walk through Paul's argument and show how it mirrors who Jesus shows himself to be (most but not all parallels drawn from yesterday's material)

7.0 Christian community and the vision of Christ among us

Rom. 12: 3 "not to think more highly of yourself than you ought, but to think with sober judgment"--humility, expecting the truth from ourselves and others

Rom. 12:4-8 together we mirror Christ "we who are many are one body in Christ"

we are interdependent, one (cf. Jesus' trinitarian statement in John 17) "individually we are members one of another."

this interdependence is shown, and nurtured, and completed, in the gifts

Rom. 12:9-10 in the body we show love, seek out and honor what is best in the other, and seek to encourage the best in them

Rom. 12:12-13 be confident in the work you have to do (don't need protecting)

rejoice in hope (be ready to celebrate); be patient in suffering (Christ suffered too), care for those in your circle but also for those you don't know

(the children--probably in the house in Bethany--and the blind man are examples of Jesus' care for insiders & outsiders)

Rom. 12:14 Bless those who persecute you: Jesus enduring the cross, praying for his tormentors

Rom. 12: 15 Rejoice with the rejoicing (Zaccheus), weep with the weepers (rich young ruler)

Rom. 12:16 Live in harmony, be humble, associate with the lowly: Christ and the children, Zaccheus

Rom 12: 17 No revenge! Jesus suffered to the end; "like a lamb" before his attackers

Rom. 12:18 Insofar as possible, at peace with others (Jesus did not seek conflict but did not shun it when the stakes were appropriate--think of his relationship with the Pharisees)

Rom. 12:19-21 Again, no revenge; overcome evil with good. The Cross is the ultimate expression of this

Rom 13:1-7 Respect for authorities: pay to Caesar, but also remember "only God is good."

Rom. 13:8-12 Love fulfills the law, rather than simply being an external observance (demanding total fealty to God; the rich young ruler, who had idols ahead of God)

Rom 13: 11-14: Lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light...put on the Lord Jesus Christ. A summary. In authentic Christian community, we show forth Christ.

8.0 In closing

This is practical. It is hands on. It both feeds and lets us feed others. It allows good benchmarks for how we are doing. It glorifies God and shows the world the reality of Christ.