

The Grumpy Disciple Blog #25

The Voice of One ~~Crying~~ Pouting In The Wilderness

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OUTRAGEOUS

There's trouble. Trouble in Christianity. Even before Christianity was Christianity there was trouble. The core disciples of Jesus, the Apostles, bickered and boasted among themselves. It's no wonder that Jesus occasionally went off by himself to pray. "Pray" might've been a code word. He'd be gone all night – perhaps to do some praying, yes, but more so, just to get away from those 12 men.

The 12 habitually got wrong what their Teacher said. This was in an age before Q-Tips ear swabs, communication moved slower – still – in one ear and out the other occurred.

Fast forward. After the beginnings of the Early Church, there was a honeymoon period of sorts. Then saints sputtered and spewed in contention with one another— division happened.

Back track. Jesus instructed the 12, "I am giving you a new command. You must love each other, just as I have loved you. If you love each other, everyone will know that you are my disciples." John's Gospel 13:34, 35. The command is typically interpreted to mean all disciples, then and now. And there's the trouble. This hasn't worked.

Most any atheist, common pedestrian, or non-Christian, without a second thought, will say that the followers of Jesus have failed to love in such a way. That's sad. What signifies Christians is not their 'love for one another' but rather, their disagreements with 'one another.' The more one researches Church history and current Christianity, the more one is astounded not by unity or healthy diversity, but by division.

The lengthy prayer of Jesus, in John 17, reveals his desire for a 'oneness.' He and God are 'one' and he wants the disciples to enter such oneness, "...in order that they may be One with each other, as We are One." It's awkward to consider that he didn't have his prayer answered. That's not correct theology!!! Jesus always had his prayers answered. Right? Well, if he didn't, then what chance do we have for our consumer-minded prayers to get the best parking spot? How depressing. Perhaps such a Oneness did happen, but exists on an unseen mystical plane.

I did some reading up on an early American colonist, named Roger Williams (1562–1620). A religious man, Williams played hop-scotch with various church denominations, Puritan, Reformed, Reformed Baptist, Free Will Baptist, Church of England, Separatist and something called a Particular Baptist. He searched for the closest church to his beliefs of perfect theology. In the New World, a location prescribed for religious liberty, Williams was eventually put on trial by the Puritans for sedition and heresy. To escape prison or worse, he traveled 55 miles in the dead of the New England winter to what is now Rhode Island. The kicker? The territory where he finally, safely settled, he deemed to have been God's 'providence' in saving his neck. Hence the name, Providence, Rhode Island—a name with shame built right in.

Today, during this time of year we vaguely remember the Puritans, the first Christians to the northern Atlantic shores and the friendly Native Americans—but emphasize cooked turkeys above all else. Yum!

Christianity is a global pick n' chose religion. Besides the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Protestant, non-denominational, etc. There are thousands of sub-varieties and new ones all the time. Each considers their doctrinal line up as the right one...as did the Colonists, as did the Catholics, as did the fill in the blank_____.

Back to the effrontery that Christ's command is too difficult, and that his good prayer was/is unanswered. I know that there were/are pockets where 'love for one another' has surfaced. We see it briefly in the New Testament Acts of the Apostles. Persecution seems to birth this. Deep love of God, births this. Repentance followed by strengthening grace, births this. Hope of prophetic fulfillment too.

The disgrace of the Church must disappoint God. Regrettably, I see little success of His plan. When average eyes see the embarrassing, massive failure of what the Jewish Messiah put into motion, what can believers say? Is my assertion outrageous, or just uncomfortably realistic?