

Metho-huh? Week 7: Unity. Liberty. Charity.

Scripture

Romans 14: 1-13

Welcome those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions. Some believe in eating anything, while the weak eat only vegetables. Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat; for God has welcomed them. Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another? It is before their own lord that they stand or fall. And they will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make them stand. Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds. Those who observe the day, observe it in honor of the Lord. Also those who eat, eat in honor of the Lord, since they give thanks to God; while those who abstain, abstain in honor of the Lord and give thanks to God. We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living. Why do you pass judgment on your brother or sister? Or you, why do you despise your brother or sister? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, "As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God." So then, each of us will be accountable to God. Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another.

John 8:3-11

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

Questions

- 1.) Though the topics may have changed, controversies have evidently existed in the church from very early. The Romans passage shows that there were Christians who had convictions of eating only particular foods while others were more liberal in their food intake. Much of this had to do with the opinions of how Jewish the church should be: to remain kosher or be open to other foods. Christian history is rife with schism. What does Paul urge his readers/hearers to do? What sorts of things divide Christians today? Is Paul's teaching still relevant or too naïve?
- 2.) John Wesley quoted St. Augustine: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things; Charity". What might some essentials be in the Christian faith? How much can/should we budge? What are some non-essentials?
- 3.) Last week Occupy Seattle was discussed. Many have different opinions of what it stands for, even in our church. How would we apply the essentials theory to the differing opinions in this case?
- 4.) Is there a negative side, real or perceived, to the essentials theory? Do you feel any frustrations with it? For example, might "agree to disagree" hinder movements of social justice?
- 5.) How does the John passage show the complexities of tolerance? Is Jesus embodying mercy or justice or both? How might it show how we are to orientate ourselves to justice?
- 6.) John Wesley said: "If your heart is as my heart, give me your hand". What do you think he means?

Prayer: *O Holy God, forgive your church for not recognizing the unity made possible by the Holy Spirit. Give our heart eyes to see our brothers and sisters beyond opinions. Let us unite for the purpose of the Kingdom of God. In your name, Amen.*