**“Must Words”**

Psalm 71:1-6

Jeremiah 1:4-10

1 Corinthians 12:31b—13:13

Luke 4:31-44

Epiphany 4, Jan. 29/30, 2022

Jesus said, “I **must** preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God to other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

It’s said that one should **avoid** discussing the topics of politics and religion in social settings (family gatherings, for instance). Those being (in general) “**serious topics**” (as opposed to, maybe, light-hearted banter), **can and should** we talk (lovingly, of course) about such among family or acquaintances? Is it more loving to **discuss** or **leave alone “serious things”? That is a question.** I wonder if **Jesus** **avoided** talking about things He thought important for Him to say to people, therefore “what would **Jesus** do?” says something in answer to this question.

Based on today’s readings, being **un-complacent** in discussing important (Kingdom of God) matters seems to depend upon **two things:** the **authority** or **truth** of what’s “at question” (what today’s Gospel calls **Christ’s** “**teaching**” / literally His divine “**doctrine**”), and then how “**necessary**” it was **for Him** (as He’d said about it) to speak (His “**preaching**” or (in Greek) “**kerrusso**” distinct from the “teaching **content**” (or “**didache**” … **the truth of the Gospel proclaimed (Good News / the facts of the “Kingdom of God”)**. So, deciding upon **WHETHER OR NOT TO do what He did and “preach” Jesus’ “doctrine” (to “kerrusso” His “didache”), that’s the only** **question**. And, if **it’s needing to be said and clarified where it’s unheard or confused**, **THAT’S** a **NECESSARY DISCUSSION TO HAVE if we desire to love as Jesus loved**.

**Text**

“**Jesus’** **doctrine / teaching and Word possessed authority” the** **text says**. **He “MUST preach” it He said**. So, **what’s that to us?** Ought we to **speak up and proclaim Gospel like He had to?** Are **we** to **do** **as Jesus did with the same “doctrine” He gave us** or leave it all as topics for Him only and for history? Does **what God told Jeremiah to do** **make necessary what we must do**? With the **authority** of the **always perfect and authoritative “teaching” of the doctrine of Jesus and God’s Kingdom**, wouldn’t it be necessary for **us** **to** **speak it and discuss it?**

**That’s where the “love chapter / 1st Corinthians” (chapter 13) addresses this topic**: “the **still more excellent way**” is what we “**MUST DO in love as Jesus did**”. “If **I** speak in the tongues **of men** and **of angels** (in other words, **babble on about insignificant topics or even demonic ones**) **not having Christ (Who’s the embodiment of Love / Him the Gospel / truth)**, then “**I am** a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal” (useless and maybe harmful / talking nonsense or “**small**” in substance (getting defensive even in guarding my own opinion, positioning it as authoritative inaccurately and uncorrected) …

… but it’s “**God in Christ** patient and kind” (**Him** by being the very definition of the “agape” word for love. So, read 1st Corinthians 13 the way it was **meant**: “**Christ Jesus (“agape love”)** does not envy or boast”, but rather wants one to **have Him and His Father fully**; “**Christ** is not arrogant or rude”, just **given**. “**Jesus** does not rejoice at wrongdoing but rejoices always **with the truth**. **He** (and **here’s the Gospel able to be given to people in ways Jesus promised it to be given personally to people**) **bore all things and was faithful (following His Father) in all things, followed through with everything needful … and endured all things for us and for our salvation**”.

That (among so many other wonders) is **WHAT** He wants / **insists** that **everyone know (discuss and make it be said)**. Without His “teaching” / “doctrine, **“noisy gongs” or “clanging cymbals” can’t be recognized, inaccurate opinion or just personal feeling is not known or differentiated from the content of Jesus for us and the Kingdom**. It’s **love** from the desire to “**know the Lord even as we’ve been fully known**” and responds to grace without settling for something less: (“when I was a child, I spoke **like a child**, I thought like a **child**, I reasoned like a **child**, but when I became a **man**, I **gave up childish ways**”).

## Application

Perhaps “**how to discuss like men and not, just, play like children**” needs consideration of one more **foreign word**. “**Adiaphora**” is what’s indifferent and **not part of the “doctrine” (or “teaching”) of Christ**, where **latitude is available in areas disputable, with a tolerance for opinions that aren’t, necessarily, right nor wrong)**. “Adiaphora” might be the color of a church’s carpet or the shape of a worship building or the best ice cream flavor for church socials, **indifferent or “adiaphora”**, and these should not be topics for **“contention”**. Yet **God’s Word must be wrestled with and for, and what helpfully or hurtfully effects its authority**. From the **proclamation and discussion of His “teaching”** (the “**doctrine**” as it’s called in Luke 4), Jesus wouldn’t be distracted … He’d “preach”. He even suspended the work of healing to **DISCUSS HIS DOCTRINES TO ALL THAT HE MUST** …

… and less things are **“adiaphora”** during persecution. Normally indifferent things can be helpful, instructive and beneficial and uplift for proclamation necessary truth. But some things of technical freedom might carry the harmful baggage if **self-interests unconcerned really with Kingdom things**, so **what’s “adiaphora” or not is also important conversation** … and skipping even **that** adult conversation would be what Paul considers “**childish**”. Even “adiaphora” can be **helpful in teaching** “**doctrine**” or **detracting** **from it so IT SHOULD ALSO BE DISCUSSED**. …..

It's said that discussing politics or religion in social settings should be avoided. **Avoiding discussing (as adults) the “doctrines” of Christ and even what’s “adiaphora” may be one of the gravest of sins, omitting a MUST. and what’s not in that**. Have those discussions … **especially** **with** family and friends. So, **what if** God and His things were topics of **first choice for us** in order to exercise our brains and souls (and we **have the roadmap and tools for this)**? **What if** (in loving honesty) **Godly discussions were ongoing among us and with growing numbers of people, and that (as 1st Corinthians suggests) was (in our daily life) the “still more excellent way” we exercised** **… which we ALL (family included) agreed to PURSUE?** I’d like to pray for this **PURSUIT**:

“Lord, place Your Words into our mouths and hearts and minds and let **us** speak of Your things and You, never avoiding the necessity topic of truth. Grant us the **clear and loving conversation of adulthood**. Help us defend truth where it’s challenged or unbelieved and give us **compassion for those who need to hear Your Gospel which literally is all of us over and over and over again**. Grant to **ALL PEOPLE receptive hearts for open discussion**. Create **opportunities for that** yet also help us **dictate opportunities**. Let **love** include the regular **seeking of and discussing of truth**. In +Jesus’ name. Amen.”