

WE ARE (supposed to be) DIFFERENT John 17:6-19; GAL 1:6-10

Take a moment if you would to think about what would be different if men really ruled the world. One little difference might be, for example, that tanks would be far easier to rent/own. Another would be that the only show opposite Monday Night Football would be Monday Night Football from a Different Camera Angle. Things would be different in relationships as well. Instead of an expensive engagement ring, you could present your wife-to-be with a giant foam hand that said, "You're #1!" Nodding and looking at your watch would be deemed an acceptable response to "I love you." When your girlfriend really needed to talk to you during the game, she'd appear in a little box in the corner of the screen during a time-out. Breaking up would be a lot easier too. A smack to the derriere and a "Nice hustle, you'll get 'em next time" would pretty much do it. Telephones would automatically cut off after 30 seconds of conversation. Instead of a beer belly, you'd get "beer biceps." When it came to work, the funniest guy in the office would get to be CEO. And at the end of the workday, a whistle would blow and you'd jump out your window and slide down the tail of a brontosaurus and right into your car like Fred Flintstone. That would make things a lot different.

Our text is about us being different, different from the world, that is. Jesus prayed that we would be in the world but not of the world. We aren't supposed to be like everyone else. We are to be extra-ordinary, in a God is designed way, in looking out for other people sort of way, in a courageous and standing up for the truth type of way. Jesus expects the world to be a better place because He came as Savior, and He expects the world to be different because generations of His disciples have lived and died in Christ for 100's of years. He expects us to care about things that perhaps few others care about and to put our words and lives on the front lines where truth is fighting falsehood, power is punishing the powerless, injustice is defeating justice. Our lives are supposed to matter to God. We are to "be courageous for the sake of" God's kingdom. 2 Sam. 10:12 The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." So don't stay silent about what matters to you. Don't keep quiet about what is important to the kingdom. As scripture says, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what others might do to me."

What we want to see this morning is that being just like everyone else is, basically, wrong.

Sure, of course, there are role models you want to emulate. But, my gosh, a lot of people will simply lead you down the wrong path. What's right for them isn't right for you. They may not even be doing anything wrong, but still you have to get on with what God is doing in your life. We are to be one with Christ, not one with some fallible, mixed up person. Please don't follow the beat of someone else's drummer. Follow Christ's and you will find His way in your life.

A guy on a Harley had these words on the back of his black leather jacket, "If You Can Read This, My Wife Fell Off." Back in the 70's, Harley Davidson started to lose its market share to Japanese motorcycle imports. It was well into the 1980s before company leadership embraced the hard-core biker groups that was showing incredibly faithful brand loyalty. To ward off the Japanese invasion, Harley made a final, desperate bid for survival by focusing on its legendary connection with rebelliousness, sheer vitality and off-the-wall lust for the primitive life. That

strategy to be different worked. Harley saved itself by embracing its outlaw image. Hog riders and cycle lovers wanted to see themselves as being different from the world, and no matter the role they play 9-to-5—as lawyers, accountants or business leaders—they feel unashamed and unabashed as they strapped on their leathers and rumble off on their “Milwaukee monsters.” There’s a message here for us, whether we are biker blue bloods or not. Jesus, in his great prayer in today’s text, hopes his disciples will be willing to be in the world but not of the world. If you got to see the motorcycle biker convention at the Atlanta Motor Speedway you know how different bikers are.

The supreme example of this is Jesus himself. You and I know he brought nothing but good into the world. But, he was different. Some of the things he said were in direct contradiction to the standards of the world: turning the other cheek, walking the second mile, loving your enemy, forgiving an unlimited number of times. He broke all the established patterns. Simply by the way he lived, he caused people to judge their ways, which wasn’t appreciated. So he was terminated. By perjury, blackmail, sheer barbarianism, the world thought it would destroy him by nailing him to a cross _But look, the late Sen. James A. Reed, of Missouri observed something very important. He said, “The majority crucified Jesus Christ; the majority burned the Christians at the stake; the majority established slavery; the majority jeered when Columbus said the world was round; the majority threw him into a dungeon for having discovered a new world; the majority cut off the ears of John Pym because he dared advocate the liberty of the press.” Not being in the majority doesn’t sound like the smartest thing in the world to be, but it is often where God’s future is first revealed. So be different. Do the different. Be extra-ordinary. Take the path less traveled—that’s where God likes to hang out.

Notice how excited and direct Paul is in Gal. “I am astonished...” “That you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different Gospel—which is really no Gospel at all.” I am so glad he said that because there really is no other Gospel than the one that says Jesus is Lord and died for our sins and by faith in Him we have eternal life. You may have heard of the prosperity gospel or the new shepherd gospel where pastors have absolute power over their members or the 144,000 gospel where you are taught that unless you are a member of that church and a member of the 144,000 you will not make it to heaven. These are no gospels at all.

I like the way Paul ends this section. He says, “whose approval am I trying to win, men or God?” Paul is going to be different no matter what and that means his goal is to please God not man. A long time ago I determined that I would never try to please my audience when I pray and preach. I would be aware of my audience, old, young and in between, but my goal has remained to preach so as to please God not man. **I would guess that most of you do not know what W-1.4005 says in the Book of Order?** In Summary it says, the pastor has certain responsibilities which are NOT subject to the authority of the session. And then it lists 5 items, Scripture, preparation and preaching of the sermon, prayers, music, and the use of drama, dance, and other art forms. (OK Alisa, bring out the dancing girls.) **Why would they put such an exception like that in the Book of Order?** So no minister/pastor would ever be in the business of pleasing men instead of God. It is so we could be different.

Jesus was under no illusion about the way the world would react to his ministry. Three times he said something to his disciples about the fate in store for him. He made no effort to conceal it. And in those last hours he spent with them, he gave them a final warning: "If you belong to the world, it will love you. But if you belong to me the world will hate you." Jesus was always trying to make a would-be follower aware of the inevitability of persecution and rejection. For us, our world, always will suspect the different. Conformity is the way to a trouble-free life. Christians are inevitably non-conformists. Those early Christians were different. They were different in their moral life, different in their social life, different in their working life, different in their economic life. It was their being different that made such a difference. Without them, there would be no Christ for us. It's in being yourself that the Lord gets to be himself.

I am on the Committee on Preparation for Ministry. We are very thorough when it comes to checking up on our inquirers. It is so big we have 3 sub-committees. A lady in my group, A, wrote a reference check questionnaire which is for us to call the references of the person and check them out. It is very well done. It has the usual questions like how long have you know them; do you think they would make a good minister?, etc. The 2nd page list 7 qualities and ask the reference to rate on a scale of 1-5 the individual in question. I know this lady and she has hit the bulls eye with these questions. Here are a 4: does "blank" have qualities of compassion and caring?; does "blank" desire to alleviate suffering?; does "blank" have the ability to work without being thanked or supported?; is "blank" able to live with ambiguity and accept rejection? Lets stop right there. That tells you that the ministers and elders on this committee understand what it means to serve and be different.

(((Writer Niel Lorenz of Ohio tells how her friend, a young wife and mother of three, chose to spend the last year of her life while afflicted with cancer. Linda made it clear from the beginning that cancer was inconvenient, annoying and unwelcome, but that it would not rule her life. Accordingly, she and her whole family continued to take scuba lessons at a local pool to prepare for a big family vacation in the Cayman Islands./// Linda was determined not just to go, but to participate in the family holiday. So adamant was she about this that when her blood count proved dismal the day before the intended trip, she simply checked herself into the hospital overnight, and received the medication she needed through an all-night I.V. connection. Once in the islands, she rested and watched her family go out for their daily excursions to the reef. But she wanted to go diving with them, be a participant, not just an observer./// In response to her incredible determination and positive spirit, a group of local diving instructors devised a way that she could join her family. Because her spine was too brittle and ulcerated to bear the weight of the tank, they fitted her with a mask and mouthpiece and, as she breathed in it, they weighted her just enough to put her under the water. Then they floated an oxygen tank on a piece of foam above her and carefully added weights until Linda, the divers, and the tank slipped slowly beneath the surface. For nearly an hour the entire family was able to explore the wonders of the island reefs. Later, when Linda's husband Steve tried to pay for all the extra time and effort the dive team had gone to, he was turned down with these words: "We dive here everyday. We have seen that reef literally hundreds of times. We know every rock, every piece of coral and practically every fish on it. Today, however, we saw it through the eyes of someone with such courage and spirit that we looked at it in a different way. It is we who thank you and your family for the day. It is we who can never repay you." Being different just may mean letting others be different. Or I should say, being yourself could be just what others need in order to be

themselves.)))))

A Christian is not a person with average tastes. A Christian is not a person with average morals. A Christian is not a person with average ideals. There is a moral standard to which you and I are responsible. It bridges the separation between all people of all walks of life. You are called upon to not only love your equals and those not your equals, even your enemies. If you are to be a Christian, you have to possess the courage to be different. As Jesus said, "Beware when all people speak well of you."

Have you heard the Japanese eat very little fat and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans. The French eat a lot of fat and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans. The Japanese drink very little red wine and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans. The Italians drink excessive amounts of red wine and also suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans. The Germans drink a lot of beer and eat lots of sausages and fats and suffer fewer heart attacks than the British or Americans. **Conclusion:** Eat and drink what you like. Speaking English is apparently what kills you. Speaking and acting or eating differently can have either a good effect or be a detriment. Change is like that

The truth is we don't get a written out plan for today's handling of events big or small. We also don't have a staff or set of advisers helping us to decide what to do or not do, what to say or leave unsaid. Many people would like each day to be the same in order to be able to give the responses they have already learned and know by heart. But things happen that are outside of our routine. We are forced to play matters as they come. **So the question is how do you know how to play them? 1st you have to know the truth about yourself and also our church. The truth will set us free. 2nd You have to get to the point and believe that what matters to you is what really matters to God. 3rd you have to give yourself over to Christ 100%. You have to let the Holy Spirit rule in your heart. You have to let God manage your affairs, mark your paths, order your steps.**

What really came through at the Tri- Presbytery Training event was we need to be authentic, real about who we are as a church and honest about who is our neighbor. Then we better do something different, different than anything we have ever tried before. Your brain may hurt as we think about being different. There is a whole generation out there that does not need or want another program. We are living in the digital age. A lot of you grew up on print media; then audio/visual; then broadcast news—only 3 networks; then cd's and dvd's; now digital. Notice many young folks do not wear watches. If you ask them the time they pull out their cell phones. DIFFERENT. I have to close this down. In my group we were told the future of Sunday School is about over. Oglethorpe Pres. Church just closed down their Sunday School and in the fall will offer an alternative at a different time doing a different thing. Church of the New Covenant flyer about having a dog fair that reaches the community. Yesterday.

THE POWER TO BE DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD COMES FROM HAVING JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR SAVIOR AND THE HOLY SPIRIT AS YOUR POWER, COMFORTER AND GUIDE. WE ARE SUPPOSE TO BE DIFFERENT, DIFFERENT AS JESUS CHRIST WAS DIFFERENT. AND DIFFERENT WILL SAVE THIS CHURCH AND REACH OUR MISSION FIELD – CLAYTON COUNTY, GEORGIA.