

We See Jesus (10): Outside the Camp

(Hebrews 13:11-14)

I. Introduction

- A. Historical marker at Surry marks the founding of Christian church by James O’Kelly
1. In 1807, O’Kelly would baptize Joseph Thomas, a different kind of restoration leader
 - a. Thomas didn’t focus on restoring forms (*Lord’s Supper*) or institutions (*eldership*)
 - b. He believed that religions division was caused by greed, worldliness and pride
 - c. He thought the church would be restored when we came to holiness and humility
 2. Thomas sold his farm, put off black suit preachers wore and dressed in white robe.
 - a. They called him “*White Pilgrim*” as preaching a gospel of holiness and repentance
 - b. He died in 1835 when he contracted small pox while preaching in New York City
 - c. Dylan’s “*Lone Pilgrim*” on his “*Word Gone Wrong*” album is a tribute to Thomas
*Go tell my companion and children most dear To weep not for me now I'm gone.
The same hand that led me through seas most severe Has kindly assisted me home.*
- B. So how would you characterize the White Pilgrim? *Confused? Naïve? Totally insane?*
1. All of the above? Perhaps, but Thomas struggled with something we tend to ignore.
 - a. Bible see the world and church in uneasy tension (**Rom 12:2; Jam 4:4; 1 Jn 2:15-17**)
 - b. We are in the world, but not of the world... and that can be confusing (**Jn 17:15-16**)
 2. There is a tension between these two words, and we tend toward one of two extremes
 - a. **Isolation:** Some seek to preserve faith by basically retreating from world
 - 1) White Pilgrim checked-out of world; we can accuse the Amish of the same
 - 2) Many of us live in “*Christian Ghettos.*” Our time/relationships are believers
 - 3) Some now suggest that our world is so bad this is necessary (*Benedict Option*)
 - b. **Immersion:** Some go to opposite extreme—relate so well to world, no difference!
 - 1) This is why there seems to be no difference in divorce rate or even abortion rate
 - 2) We relate so well with our non-Christian neighbors we have nothing for them
 - 3) Casting Crowns hit at this several years ago in song “*What This World Needs*”
*What this world needs is for us to stop hiding behind our relevance, blending in so well that
people can't see the difference— and it's the difference that sets the world free*
- C. Today as we end our study of Hebrews, we come face to face with these two extremes
1. If we see Jesus and follow Him— then we’ll be a bit out of step with our world
 2. If we find ourselves fitting in a bit too well with world, maybe we don’t see Jesus
 3. To follow Christ, we must follow Him outside camp (**Reading: Hebrews 13:11-14**)
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II. Outside the Camp: Then

- A. The writer once again calls his readers here back to something in their Jewish past.
1. The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled before God on the Day of Atonement
 - a. This was a high and holy and special ritual—it only took place once a year
 - b. But after the blood is offered, the animal was burned outside camp (**Lev 16:27**)
 - 1) The blood was holy; the rest of the animal was ritually contaminated by sin.
 - 2) The pomp and ceremony began in the holy place; it ended up outside camp.
 2. The point of the writer’s imagery was that Jesus was taken outside the camp
 - a. His crucifixion took place at Golgotha, a place outside the camp (Jerusalem).
 - b. “*Place of the skull*” was outside acceptability or respectability (George MacDonald) “*The kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble.*”
 - 1) The cross means many things, but first and foremost it meant rejection.
 - 2) Like the refuse of the Old Testament sacrifice, Jesus was left outside the camp!
 - c. The writer’s point is that if we are to follow him, the we must go outside the camp
 - 1) We must be willing to leave safe confines of respectability and acceptance
 - 2) We cannot be accepted by the world and follow Jesus; we must leave the camp!
- B. Those who would followed Christ in the first century ran into the “*scandal of the cross*”
1. Paul talks about this when he wrote this to the Corinthians in **1 Corinthians 1:22-24**
 - a. Talk about tough audiences— Jews looked for signs, Greeks looked for wisdom
 - b. Those two things are still high on the religions hit parade today
 - 1) **Signs/Experiences:** Better-felt-than-told, feel-it-in-gut, know-it-when-I-feel-it
 - 2) **Knowledge/Logic:** Figure-it-out, God-of-a-silly-sim, know-it-when-I-know-it
 2. Paul offered only one thing, the scandal of the cross. And it really was a scandal!
 - a. Only slaves died on crosses in the first century; citizens were spared that indignity!
 - b. The idea of a crucified Christ placed Christianity outside the walls of respectability.
 - 1) The idea was a stumbling block to Jews and pure foolishness to the Greeks
 - 2) If you believe that foolishness, then you were on your own! Outside the camp
 3. The Hebrew readers had already suffered some abuse for their faith (**Heb. 10:33-34**)
 - a. Following Christ has always led disciples outside the camp of respectability
 - b. It still does today. If you take up the cross, you won’t fit into the world around you
 - c. Why? Jesus went outside the camp; to follow Him, we must go outside the camp!

III. Outside the Camp: Today

- A. This message is critical for us today as if our faith is to survive in our “pagan” world.
1. Believers must see themselves as living “outside the camp” of their culture
 - a. Writers said that the faithful see themselves as foreigners and strangers (**Heb 11:13**)
 - b. That’s the identity Peter wants his readers to take on themselves (**1 Pet 1:17, 2:11**)
 - c. Hebrews writer ends book calling us outside the camp because that’s where Jesus is
 2. Following Christ means following Him outside camp of acceptance and acceptability
 - a. It will make us different from our world in ways that should be pretty obvious
 - 1) It means we’ll focus on more people and less on stuff (*in world that’s opposite*)
 - 2) It means we rely on God and on prayer (*in world that’s “seeing is believing”*)
 - 3) It means we live by an ethics written in stone (*world where everything is fluid*)
 - 4) It means we accept and welcome everyone (*even if we don’t accept everything*)
 - 5) It means loving everyone, every those who are difficult (*it’s how Jesus loves*)
 - b. It means we seek God’s truth while the world accept everything as true... or nothing
 - c. All of this may put us out of step with the world, and even with many in the church.
- B. All of this will place us outside the camp of acceptance and respectability.
1. But there is no other way to follow Christ than bearing the disgrace that He bore.
 - a. Make no mistake. There was no greater disgrace than the cross; there still isn’t.
 - b. That is why we must fix our eyes on Jesus. Remember the call of **Heb. 12:2**—
 - 1) We blow right past that. For Jesus to endure the cross, he scorned shame!
 - 2) We are called to follow in that shame. *Ever felt the scandal of the cross?*
 2. Have you ever been torn between the expectations of others and that of God?
 - a. You know, that moment when a conversation go dead quiet because you...
 - 1) Suggest to that you believe abortion is a moral issue, not just a political one?
 - 2) Suggest that systemically poor people need to get some systematic helped?
 - 3) Stop someone when they start to tell a racial joke. Or one on homosexuality
 - 4) Or maybe it’s some juicy gossip and you say, “*I don’t need to hear that*”
 - 5) Or maybe it just that awkwardness when you finally ask someone to church
 - b. Come to think of it, all but the last of example applies to church folks too!
 3. If our faith fits seamlessly into our daily world... maybe we\ aren’t doing it right!
 4. Jesus went outside the city to be offered; if we are to follow him, we must leave camp

IV. Conclusion

- A. Most imposing site on Outer Banks is the Wright Brother's memorial in Kitty Hawk.
 - 1. It is dedicated to Orville and Wilbur Wright, who launched the modern age of flight.
 - a. Read papers of their day, they were strange eccentrics out of touch with real world.
 - 1) Many thought it impossible for heavier than air vehicle to ever get off ground.
 - 2) If God would have meant for man to fly, He would have given him wings!
 - b. If the Wright brothers listened to conventional reasoning, they'd stuck to bicycles!
 - 2. But they had a vision, and they were dedicated to its pursuit. And they paid a price.
 - a. And now there is a monument to their vision at Kitty Hawk (LAX, DFW and PHF)
 - b. Critics were silenced, drowned by the roar of machines that took men to the moon!
 - 3. To get there, Orville & Wilbur had to leave the comfortable and conventional behind
- B. So do we! Are we really going to buy into this story of the Crucified Christ?
 - 1. Jesus left heaven to come to earth to live as a one of us and die for all of us
 - a. Now we must leave our world behind to live for Him so we can live with Him
 - b. We have to decide if we are going to follow Jesus—if so, we must go outside camp
 - 2. If we follow Jesus, then we'll really will be just a bit out of step with our world
 - a. If we fit in too well with the world, then perhaps it isn't Jesus we are following
 - b. Are you following Him? Have you let him have control of your life today?