



October 10, 2022

## Having Our Faith Challenged

I grew up in a family where my mother had a deep faith in God while my father did not. When he was asked about church, his reply was that church people were hypocrites. That same charge is still being made by people who do not belong to any church. We don't do what we say we believe. They say that we do not do unto others as we wish they would do unto us. (Matthew 7:13)

Our love can be transactional. We do unto others and expect them to return the favor. For years, people have joined church believing Jesus is our Lord and Savior because He saves us from going to hell. That is a very self-centered approach to faith.

We also repeat our confessions which were created in a different time period. The Nicene Creed was written in 325 C.E. when people had lost their Hebrew understanding of life. They only knew Greek way, which is a dualistic way of seeing life. Dualistic means we see only two choices, either this or that. Thus, we say there are good people and bad people. We like to think we are the good people. Remember, Jesus spoke Aramaic where everything and everyone are connected. Jesus' reality is the whole is greater than the sum of it's parts, whereas the Greeks saw the sum of the parts creating the whole. As for us, our lens into reality is more like that of the Greeks, and that's not how Jesus presented the Good News. The Good News is: The Kingdom of God is in us and among us. (Luke 17:21). And yet, we have become defenders of a faith that says heaven is that which is beyond death.

To those outside the church today, they can see church as a boring place. We don't like change. We love keeping our liturgy the same, so there can be very little creativity. We keep telling people they are sinners, and that they need to repent. But in the gospels, I do not see Jesus telling people they are sinners. He ate and drank with people who were understood as sinners in that day. He said that the harlots will enter the kingdom before the religious leaders. (Matt. 21:31)

The Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 13 says that when we were a child we thought like a child, but when we became adults, we put away our childish ways. The path of faith is dropping that which is no longer true and changing our life to what we now know. We know when the scriptures were written, the people believed in a three-story universe as the Bible describes. There is the dome at the top and that is where God is. The dome is held up by pillars. Underneath the dome is a flat earth and the sun revolves around the earth. Underneath is the place of the dead called Sheol. Everyone who dies ends up in Sheol. (Ps. 88). We know today that universe does not exist, yet our understanding of what scriptures say can be based on it.

We say in Genesis 3 that there was a fall from perfection. But now we know that idea is based on a Greek philosophical understanding given to us by Plato. Plato influenced St. Augustine's thinking, who came up with this idea of a fall from perfection, and that sin was passed on biologically from parent to child. That is why some people say we are all born in sin. This understanding of original sin cannot be found in the scriptures. St. Paul wrote in Galatians 5:1, "For freedom, Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."

If we are to grow in our faith, it's time to let it be challenged and to stop repeating what we know is no longer true. Truth will remain, if it really is true.

~Written by The Rev. Russ Brandt



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