

Titus 1

Apostleship & Identity (v.1-3)

Identity: Servant

"Servant" in Greek here is "doulos" - meaning slave.

Servitude, in the ancient world, however, was not always against one's will.

In some cases, being a doulos, was either out of necessity or even choice.

It was considered an occupation and at times a reasonable and honourable one.

This by no means justifies our contemporary forms of slavery, which some seem to not only accept but promote.

But we need to understand what Paul means when he says he is a slave of Christ.

The reason modern translations use the word "servant" is because the term is loaded in our current culture

and detracts from the real meaning.

What Paul is saying is that he has chosen, by his own free will - to serve Jesus.

A slave yields their will to a lord or master.

A slave does not live for their own purposes but for the purposes of the one they serve.

The irony is that Jesus not only taught that the greatest must become the slave of others

He became the servant of all to the point of death in order to save us.

So Paul says he is the slave of Christ, he is the servant of the greatest servant there has ever been.

We serve Christ because he served us first.

We love Christ because he loved us first.

And this is what it means to be a Christian - to be a servant, a slave of Christ.

Be he does not call us servants - he calls us friends.

Identity: Apostle

Have you ever been bored?

Boredom is the realm of the complacent and apathetic.

"I've got nothing to do." - a common summer complaint.

Boredom drives us to distraction and so we find things to fill our life.

Cars, relationships, alcohol, drugs, business, sports, video games, scotch, poker, TV, movies.

These things don't necessarily have to be destructive - some are even healthy and good.

But when these these things are pursued because there is nothing better to do - we are no longer disciples of Jesus.

Paul was never bored.

Why?

Because he had a singular purpose in life.

He was entrusted with a mission.

He was an apostle of Jesus Christ.

The word, "apostle" (apostolos) means "one who is sent out."

But what was Paul's mission?

"To further the faith of the elect - to preach - to teach the truth."

You see we have occupations and preoccupations but do we know what our mission is?

In the next two weeks we will hear from people who have a mission.

Esther Lee works with International China Concern.

ICC was started by David Gotts who witnessed the horrific conditions of orphans in China.

That experience broke his heart and he sensed God telling him that he wanted him to do something about it.

He is an apostle.

Evelyn Tan works with Power to Change.

Her ministry is to share the gospel of Jesus with students on campus and to disciple and galvanize believers.

She is an apostle.

Similar to Evelyn is Dave & Kim who work with InterVarsity Christian Fellowship.

They too are involved in outreach and discipleship at UBC's International students and Emily Carr respectively.

But you don't have to be in full time ministry to have a mission.

There is an ongoing fable in our culture that tells us we must keep our faith private and in the closet.

You are not just a doctor, you are a Christian doctor.

You are not just a banker, you are a Christian banker.

You are not just a student, you are a Christian student.

You are not just a physiotherapist, account manager, teacher, pastor, mother, father, child, friend, neighbour,

audiologist, programmer, entrepreneur, manager.

Paul is not just a travelling tent-maker.

Our identities are not found in our occupation but in our call to belong to Jesus and be sent out by him into the world.

This is what it means to be missional.

We desire this as a church as indicated by our church assessment.

The deepest felt desire both by our congregation and leadership is that we need to strengthen our outreach.

We are sent out.

We are servants of Christ.

We are apostles.

How?

Well, this is what the rest of Titus is about.

Titus is on the island of Crete and his mission is to set up a new church there.

Paul has preached and people have responded to the gospel - they have started to gather in house churches.

But what now?

What is Paul asking Titus to do?

Titus' Mission (v.4-16ff)

1. Train up church leaders - elders (presbyteroi) and a bishops (episkopoi) v.5-9 who are capable of teaching the truth and correcting error.

Likewise, our church is to train every person here to know the truth and be able to teach it.

All our elders teach.

We all learn about God and his teachings in the more structured Core Discipleship (our catechism class)

as well as the preaching in service and discussion in home groups.

My vision is for all of you, to become elders - but there are qualifications.

The ones listed here are contextual to the first century, but essentially it requires three things (in this order)

1. Character - Love, humility, teachability, selflessness, faithfulness etc.

2. Behaviour - Integrity to serve as an example of Christian faith

3. Knowledge - The ability to share a correct perspective of Christ's teachings.

2. Personally Teach & Train the People in the Church (Chapters 2-3)

This is what follows in the rest of Titus.

Facing Error (v.10-16)

Why is this so important to impart the truth?

Because there are people who teach false doctrine.

In the case of the Cretans, the strongest false teaching was among the "circumcision group."

These are what are also often termed "Judaisers" because they taught that in order to follow Jesus

you had to essentially become a Jew.

This meant - circumcision, food laws, mosaic law and cultural observances.

A translation of this for us might be cultural colonialism.

So in the end we don't really follow Jesus, but a culture and tradition.

The dangers of our own day come from two ends of the spectrum.

Legalism

The first is like that of the Judaisers.

Not that rules or guidelines are bad, but are we identifying people as in or out of the kingdom because of culture?

This has often been the problem with schisms and dissension in the church.

We make our own preferences into laws.

Examples:

Church Music - Organs v. drums

Liturgy - Book of Common Prayer v. Free Form

Style - Celebration v. Contemplation

Communion - One cup v. many cups, wine v. juice, loaf v. wafers etc.

Baptism - Immersion, Affusion, Infant, Adult

The reality is that these are peripheral preferences and not essential.

We create a so called "Christian Culture" that has little or nothing to really do with Christ's essential teaching.

This is the error of legalism.

License

The opposite end of the spectrum is to have no standards at all.

We call this Anti-nomianism. (No rules)

It is a free for all where you do whatever feels right for you.

"Don't cramp my style man!"

The problem with this is that it leans towards self-indulgence.

Whatever happened to obedience and faithfulness?

The church is responsible for providing clarity in the essentials of Christian faith.

It is easy for us just to say, "Love everyone."

But real love does not allow the person you love to walk off a cliff.

We are not responsible for what a person chooses to do, but we are responsible for making the teachings of Jesus clear.

Here are a few:

Be baptised.

Be truthful.

Be honest.

Be generous.

Be hospitable.

Be loyal.

Be humble.

Be faithful.

Be gracious.

Be wise.

Etc.

And yes there are practical teachings that extend from these:

Money, Sex & Power.

How you run your business.

How you conduct yourself in your occupation.

Who you marry or date.

How you marry or date.

How you treat your family.

How you treat your friends.

How you choose your friends.

How you function in the church.

These are not all cut and dry all the time and it takes a lifetime to learn.
But do we become stagnant or are we resilient?
Are we always learning and teachable or have we calcified?

Between the twin poles of Legalism and License is the way of Christ.
May we know what it is to hold t both truth and grace and not fall into error.