



E-MANUAL



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Orientation to Emmanuel

by Robert Yutzy

By now, most of you have met or at least seen me around Emmanuel Mennonite Church or maybe at an area co-op. I began my work here at Emmanuel on March 1st and much of my time has been spent getting oriented to your congregation and city living. Both Luann and I grew up on farms in central Ohio, even ran Lu’s family farm for 16 years. We developed a great appreciation for the wonders of springtime. We are anticipating the city of Minneapolis transforming into more of a greenhouse and be able to leave the igloos behind.

You have provided us a very warm welcome. Your thoughtful gifts of food favorites, plants and blooming bulbs, and warm conversations, and even unloading a moving truck in zero degree weather, have all helped us to deal with the disorientation that goes along with moving.

This time of working with me as your interim gives you experience in the welcoming and orientation process of calling a pastor here. I am

the trial run. As you think through the ways you have welcomed us, those lists you’ve made to prepare for our coming can be an invaluable resource. Hang on to them! You will be doing this again with your settled pastor in the not-too-distant future. You have done wonderfully with us! It is my hope and prayer that I can reciprocate that gift to the Emmanuel church.

The ending of a long term pastorate can feel very disorienting to a congregation and raise questions about how do we hear where God is leading us and will God indeed guide us? The book of Psalms has many chapters that move from an “orientation” that declares God’s faithfulness to a state of “disorientation” in the middle of tremendous change that leaves the psalmist questioning whether God is there at all or if God has perhaps forgotten them. Hear the painful cry of Psalms 22, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me.” We may struggle with giving ourselves or others permission to be so honest. I think these Psalms encourage that honesty. Psalms 88 never makes it out of disorientation and despair. Yet, most of the Psalms do end with a “new orientation” that again declares the faithfulness of God and that God is indeed “with us” after they have experienced God’s deliverance once again (see Psalms 30).

It is part of my role to help prepare the way for Emmanuel to find its way to a “New Orientation” by listening to God’s Spirit for what may be next and to move forward with a confidence that can declare that indeed God has been with us, is with us, and is guiding us into the future.



Making Jesus in Our Image

by Phil Lindell Detweiler

On Sunday, February 23, Phil Lindell Detweiler was our speaker. His message was powerful and the outline is printed here for your reference. To hear him give the complete message visit our website at <http://www.emmanuelmennonitechurch.com/media-page/sermon-archive/>

Text: Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18; I Corinthians 3:10-11, 16-23

• Introduction

▫ A couple of snapshots into our culture – **into you and I!**

▪ *Bad Religion: How America became a Nation of Heretics* by Ross Douthat (DOW-thut)

- Contention – Religion in the US has been fed by a central stream – orthodoxy.

• Content of orthodoxy:

- God is triune – Father, Son & Holy Spirit
- Virgin birth
- Resurrection of Jesus

- This moral and theological center has always been influenced positively by the minority heresy which the church has needed to keep it from becoming rote and irrelevant. **Push and pull.**

- But since the 60's and 70's heresy has gotten the upper hand over orthodoxy, with disastrous results for the faith and the nation.

- He would contend that the minority, the heretics, have become the majority in our society

- “Both doubters and believers will inevitably suffer from a religious culture that supplies more moral license than moral correction, more self-satisfaction than self-examination, more comfort than chastisement.

- “... a growing number (of Americans) are inventing their own versions of what Christianity means, abandoning the nuances

of traditional theology in favor of religions that stoke their egos and indulge or even celebrate their worst impulses.”

▪ The National Study of Youth & Religion – Christian Smith and his colleagues

- Interviewed thousands of young people to understand what was the content of their faith

- Described young people's faith as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism

▫ Five tenets of this “religion” –

1. "A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over human life on earth.";
2. "God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.";
3. "The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.";
4. "God does not need to be particularly involved in one's life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.";
5. "Good people go to heaven when they die."

- "In short, God is something like a combination Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist: he is always on call, takes care of any problems that arise, professionally helps his people to feel better about themselves, and does not become too personally involved in the process."

- God is no longer sovereign (def: having supreme rank, power, or authority; being above all others in character, importance and excellence), but rather the self is sovereign

- They describe a faith that is almost entirely subjective – **everyone defines their own truth!**

- So, young people described knowing what is wrong and what is right – but they discerned that intuitively, not from any biblical truth.

- This faith resembles orthodox Christianity in very few ways!

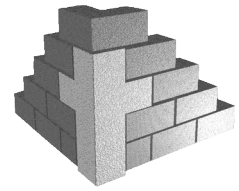
- But also described some realities that are counterintuitive – for instance, that young people are still influenced by their parents in terms of religious faith, more than conventional wisdom would tell us is the case.
- If this is truly the substance of the faith of our young people, we can rest assured that they learned it from their elders! **The spirit of our age!**
- this mix enters our text from 1 Corinthians – **read**
- This was a fundamental text for our Anabaptist forbears – because they felt that the faith was being compromised by:
 - Religious tradition being elevated to the status of Biblical revelation (Catholicism)
 - Giving authority in the church to city councils (Reformed tradition)
- They felt that the measure of faith was ultimately what Jesus said and did
- And they believed that, by the Holy Spirit, we could live out that faith that Jesus preached and lived!
- For this they were branded (by history) the radical reformation – but in their day they were simply known as heretics!
- So in our day we hollow out Jesus and fill him with whatever “I” want him to look like – **we make him into our own image rather than being formed in the image of Christ (classic Christian formula)!**
- This is a crisis of faith for us!
- Body
 - If we are in crisis, then what are the solutions to get us out of crisis
 - Solutions/affirmations
 - It’s not about me (or you!)
 - Probably very few of us in these pews would argue that God is not sovereign – the question is do our actions demonstrate that,



- in fact, we think that we are sovereign?
- Measure of Christ-centered faith – the degree to which we can take our eyes off ourselves and think of others
- Phil 2:3-4: ³Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.
- Our society says that all that matters is me – call that an untruth!
- Christ-centered faith affirms that Jesus is the foundation and that we should focus on others
- Let’s begin to focus more on Christ and others and less on ourselves – only by the Holy Spirit!
 - There is objective truth
- Anabaptists were quite orthodox in their beliefs (not so different from the Lutherans, Catholics, and Reformed traditions that they split from)
- Affirmed objective truth claims of the Bible: God created the earth, etc
- **However**, they believed that the Bible was best read and interpreted in community
- There were few religious lone rangers amongst the Anabaptists
- There are many who argue that it is the Reformation that opened the door to the individualism and designer faith that so characterizes our age
- We, as Mennonites, need to continue to affirm that there is objective truth and that we discern that together as the gathered body, not individually in religious isolation
- Therefore the life of the body becomes all that more important
- We need each other to believe rightly!
- World of our kids – much smaller! Disservice – only options are intolerance or universalism

- Christ-founded lives accept objective truths that we discern together in the body.
- Faith is both known and lived
 - We have so emphasized in the West faith as intellectual assent to certain truths
 - That is important – but not the end all and be all of faith
 - Faith is also lived
 - Gospel of John – the word translated as “know” has both the sense of intellectual assent and the sense of putting into practice
 - Here again, I think, the Anabaptists struck a good balance
 - Cease to divorce what we believe from the way we act
 - Christ-centered faith believes rightly and acts justly – let’s keep together as a unified whole the way we believe and the way we act
- Conclusion
 - We face significant challenges in living out an authentic faith in Jesus-Christ in the US in the 21st century
 - Debt of gratitude to Ross Douthat and the National Study of Youth and Religion
 - Let’s remember – “11... no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ!”
 - We are, as a body, God’s temple – let’s not destroy that temple either by believing wrongly or acting unjustly and unrighteously!
 - Together let’s discern whether the “19... the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight...” or whether there is true wisdom in what our society is believing.
 - We are not called to make Jesus in our image, but rather to be conformed to the image of Christ
 - When we are conformed to Christ, we become a counter-community, irresistible to those who are seeking the truth!

- May we be that community of Jesus-Christ, because there is no other foundation that we can build upon with confidence, other than Jesus-Christ!



**RESPONSE TO C. NORMAN KRAUSE and
150 OTHERS in the March issue of
The Mennonite
by Philip Friesen**

In the March issue of *The Mennonite*, C. Norman Krause asks us to reframe the issue at hand and put people ahead of issues. I would like to help reframe the issue as Krause suggests. I propose we try a balance of scripture and people while we talk about marriage.

In another article, 150 signatories call for change in church policy to recognize gay couples as married on an equal basis based on the fact that the Holy Spirit falls on gay and straight alike. This is true, but Holy Spirit also falls on military officers like Cornelius today, and that does not change what Jesus taught about loving our enemies.

We need to talk about the cultural values that underlie the pressures for making any kind of change. In 16th century Europe the king’s authority was the ultimate social value. Anabaptists did not recognize this to be the case. Today individual self-fulfillment is the ultimate value, and consistent with this ultimate concern our culture has turned marriage into a commodity rather than a sacrament. As a commodity it needs to be available to all, but if we hold to family and the faith community as ultimate, then we cannot agree with a consensus that seems to assume having sex to be a basic human right. As a sacrament, we’re dealing with mystery and holy fire. See “The Foundation, Meaning, and Purpose of Marriage at www.galileanfellows.org/page/4/.



REFLECTIONS ON JOHN 1:1

by Rick Hamly

When Rick Hamly joined our congregation in membership he shared these words with us.

John 1:1 – In the beginning WAS the WORD, and the WORD was with GOD, and the WORD was GOD.

Notice IN THE BEGINNING deliberately recalls the opening words of Genesis. *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. ... And God SAID let there be light.* I focus on the verb WAS. In the beginning Was. John chose the verb WAS and not IS. The beginning antedates the moment of creation. The beginning precedes the very first words of the Bible. John points to a time before creation.

The Gospel begins with the cosmic preexistence of the WORD. IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD John wrote in Greek. The translation of Word in Greek literature is Logos. That describes the rational principle of the universe. The creative plan of God that governs all of Creation. God's rational plan is expressed in John's use of the Word. The Word represents the essential self-expression of God.

AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD, Who is this divine figure WITH GOD yet not GOD himself? God was not alone. Here John goes on to link Jesus unequivocally to God. That Jesus was WITH GOD is the clear rational emphatic declaration that the Lord Jesus is God's cogent absolute manifestation. Jesus is with God at the moment of creation. Jesus, was not just with GOD, indeed Jesus was in the bosom of the Father so to reveal the heart and essence of GOD. With Jesus, the Word became flesh to reveal the divine powers that are active in the world, the mode of divine manifestation.

The closing of John's most beautiful passage in the Gospel, this hymn of rhyme prose, with AND THE WORD WAS GOD. John places Jesus with GOD. The Word is one of the highest and most preferred titles of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus represents God in the world. Jesus is the origin or absolute beginning of God's wisdom, the fullness of the divine being achieves tangible form in a historical person.

For me, John 1:1 begins the story of Jesus in the very bosom of God at the dawn of time.

