Friendship Redefined

Week 3 We need to talk about what is really in us.

Mike Colaw

I want to circle back around to the new liturgy we introduced last week based on John 13:35.

Here is how it will work. I will say the first part and you can respond.

Worship leader:

How will they know that we are Christ’s disciples?

Congregation:

By our love for one another.

Just a reminder this whole series coincides with the book we produced for the church family. Each chapter aligns with the weekly sermons.

Let’s do a quick review so far.

Week One: We are made to be interdependent not independent.

Week Two: We are made for human touch.

Week Three: We need to learn to talk about what is really in us.

Illustration:

We need to learn to talk about what is really in us. Some would call this being “authentic”.

This leads to a very important question.

To what are we to be authentic to? The postmodern heart believes this is our inner self, that we should align our external self to our inner self. Biblical authenticity is about aligning our inner self with something external, God.

Imagine a guitar that is out of tune. We don’t tune the whole world and music to the out of tune guitar, we tune the guitar to the right note. Even if you could change all of music to match the out of tune guitar, the next guitar that’s out of tune to the new definition of in tune would demand everything be rewritten again and no one could play together.

Biblically, there are two sides to right authenticity.

1. I am honest about what is inside of me. (The out of tune instrument presents itself.)
2. I am honest about what is objectively true and submit to it. (The instrument submits to the right note.)

Thomas Aquinas would call this a pursuit of what is beautiful. Aquinas says this is the combination of wholeness (Integritas), harmony (Consonatia) and radiance (Claritas).[[1]](#footnote-2)

Wholeness: This is a completeness, a satisfaction, the unbroken feeling that we long for.

Harmony: This is all the elements working to elevate the other. This is relationships that create more than their sum. Think of a chord that forms from individual notes. Something new should be born when harmony is right. From God speaking the universe into existence, to a healthy God-honoring marriage producing a baby, and even an orchestra making music, something is born when right harmony happens.

Radiance: This is that “ah-ha”, “that’s it”, “wow”, moment that calls us to a higher level. C.S. Lewis calls it the desire for a moral “true north”.[[2]](#footnote-3) Blasé Pascal calls the lack of it the “God Shaped Vacuum.”[[3]](#footnote-4) Dr. Jordan Peterson calls it, “Pursuit of the transcendent.”[[4]](#footnote-5)

Talking about what is really in you is not only learning to talk about your feelings, but also to see what is “radiant” and the distance between you and it. The Bible calls it, “walking in the light.”

Lectio:

1 John 1:5–10 (ESV)

This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. [[5]](#footnote-6)

Meditatio:

* Light: The agency by which all things become visible and understood.
  + φῶς (*phōs*). n. neut. **light.** *Agent which shines and makes visibility possible.*[[6]](#footnote-7)
* Jesus: His way, work, and teachings are the agency (light) by which true beauty (God) can be found.
  + The nt metaphorically describes Jesus as light (*phōs*; e.g., Luke 2:32; John 8:12; Eph 5:13–14); light (*phōs*) is also used as a metaphor for order and truth.[[7]](#footnote-8)
* Fellowship: The implication is that we are made for radiant relationships both with God and others. The way this is obtained is by speaking truth, confession.
* Confession: Speaking truth and accepting truth is called confession.
* Confession is a coming into wholeness, harmony, and radiance. It is an aligning with God.
* There are two sides to confession. One, speaking the Truth about you. Two, receiving what is objectively True into you.

Illustration:

When I was in high school I went through a season where I was rebelling against God and His ways. I remember being with another wayward friend and being introduced to a rap song by Snoop Dog that was all about sex. It was odd. I remember thinking that song gets me. I also knew something was off about it. The sex that it talked about wouldn’t produce life, peace and wholeness for all involved. Someone had to hurt and suffer for this sex to win. It was subjectively “good” in that it spoke clearly about something that was in me, but it clearly wasn’t objectively good or radiant.

A few years later I heard Louis Armstrong’s song Wonderful World.

Listen to these words…

I see trees of green  
Red roses too  
I see them bloom   
For me and you  
And I think to myself   
What a wonderful world

I see skies of blue   
And clouds of white  
The bright blessed day  
The dark sacred night  
And I think to myself   
What a wonderful world

The colors of the rainbow   
So pretty in the sky  
Are also on the faces   
Of people going by  
I see friends shaking hands  
Saying, "How do you do?"  
They're really saying  
I love you

I hear babies cry  
I watch them grow  
They'll learn much more   
Than I'll ever know  
And I think to myself   
What a wonderful world  
Yes, I think to myself   
What a wonderful world

I listened to that song over and over again. It didn’t ring true with what was broken in me. It called me to a place of higher beauty. I wanted to come into alignment with it.

Actio:

Speaking truth is not just sharing your feelings. It’s confession. It’s being brutally honest about what is in you before God and His people. It’s accepting back what is objectively true from God and His people about you. It is aligning your life with it. Walking in the light is tuning your life into the radiant harmony of God, the song of the Cosmos.

Let’s circle back around one more time today to the new liturgy we introduced last week based on John 13:35.

Worship leader:

How will they know that we are Christs’ disciples?

Congregation:

By our love for one another.

Actio:

(Next Steps)

What do you need to confess is out of harmony with God?

What truths of God do you need to receive about you?

1. Aquinas, Thomas. Summa Theologica. Translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Benziger Bros. edition, 1947. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Lewis, C.S. Mere Christianity. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Pascal, Blaise. Pensées, fragment 425. Translated by W.F. Trotter. New York: E.P. Dutton & Co., 1958. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Conceptualizing Christ, the Beauty of the Church & Miracles. <https://youtu.be/T8oqA5efwHs?si=DydMjWTPd3UJ0WqG>, Last Accessed Feburary 21, 2024 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](https://ref.ly/logosres/esv?ref=BibleESV.1Jn1.5-10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Jonathon Lookadoo, [“Celestial Bodies,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/lxtheowrdbk?hw=%CF%86%E1%BF%B6%CF%82) in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Jonathon Lookadoo, [“Celestial Bodies,”](https://ref.ly/logosres/lxtheowrdbk?hw=%CF%86%E1%BF%B6%CF%82&off=148&ctx=+to+see+(Eph+5%3a13).+~The+nt+metaphoricall) in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)