

5-4-25

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Counterfeit

Test and evaluate yourselves to see whether you are in the faith and living your lives as [committed] believers. Examine yourselves [not me]! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves [by an ongoing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test and are rejected as counterfeit? 2 Corinthians 13:5 AMP

I have to share a little bit of back story for my message today. My first pastorate served was the Riley Center Charge—a three church circuit back then of Riley Center, Ber-ville, and West Berlin (Allenton) UMCs, all just a few miles down the road from here. The Riley church had been built with some money in it's day and had nice stain glass windows, when I went there some were in grave need of repair. I, the only church employee, ended up being a helper to the window repair guy because the Riley Church was basically strapped for cash, the repair guy would work cheap if the church supplied a helper. This task then interested me in stain glass—which led to lessons in the big barn at the Octagon brick house on Van Dyke in Washington. I made this window about 45-46 years ago.

Now back today- And like the Riley Center Church, FCC was built with stain glass windows. And like all stain glass windows that didn't have modern protection from the elements -over the decades weathered, sagged, cracked, bent, broke etc. and needed repair. Which can become a herculean and costly task. How costly, I estimate that to place the type of stain glass in a building like this today would be in the neighborhood of 150,000-200,000 easy. The use of French style designs of hyacinths and lilies with three leafs, symbolizing new birth and the trinity. The four leaf rose of Sharon reminds us of Jesus. The grape vines in the narthex of Jesus and we His church. Highlights of color through out each have meanings , like the reds for the blood of Jesus. Did you know that gold was used to get red glass?

Now recently your board had a small moveable panel sent for repair from of one of the west sanctuary windows. So I couldn't wait to see what and how the repair people did the repairs. After the panel came back I couldn't wait to examine it. It didn't take long to note that the glass used to replace some of the broken pieces were not exactly like the originals, from a distance they look fine, but up close they pale in comparison to the craftsmanship of those from the 1800's.

Now my mind is clicking with questions how many other panes and pieces have been replaced over the years here at FCC? What did I find? There has been a lot of replacement of glass, repairs, and reinforcements almost every window has had something

done to it. Sometimes you have to really look close to find the difference from the original glass pieces and the replacements. But one thing became crystal clear it didn't matter what repair firm has been used, the originals have more depth and beauty. Almost every piece of glass used in the design here at FCC was hand painted or stenciled and then fired to lock the black paint in, and the cost or short cuts kept the repairs from looking as good as the originals. Now hear me clear, I am not complaining about how the repairs were done or the selection of who fixed the windows. I just want to vividly point out that replacements for the originals are counterfeit.

In life we seek the real thing don't we. Companies, products, tout their pedigrees and the ingredients of the original.

A song was released in 1972 from the advertising campaign. I'd like to buy the world a home and furnish it with love Grow apple trees and honey bees and snow white turtle doves. I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony I'd like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company That's the real thing .The promo release "It's the real thing" Interestingly the promo was sung by the New Seekers. The song claimed that in the back of your mind you are hoping to find 'the real thing'. That would teach the world to sing in peace and perfect harmony. Then buy the world a coke and all is well

If you follow the logic of coke 'is the real thing' what did it say about the others Pepsi, Royal Crown, etc. etc. you are only getting a counterfeit- right, which is NOT as GOOD and all will not be well with the world too!!!you just short changed yourself and all of human kind by buying anything short of Coke-Cola!!! Now remember the hope, the seeking, is to have a world in unity sipping from the bottle of the real thin .

This brings me to this morning and why we are here, true there maybe as many different reasons you are here as the number of folk in this room. But I believe many are here to worship the Real God of the universe, Amen? I believe many are here to seek guidance, direction, forgiveness, and salvation from the One true God. The Real Thing!

Now our Scripture: Paul writes in this 2nd letter to the Corinthian Church, now my guess he probably wrote more than 2 letters this church. This church was on a M53 of the Roman empire it was an area hit by about every train of thought and new religion that could come down the road. Charismatic leaders of all kinds had it on their book tours of feel good religion, eastern religion, you name it religion! Now Paul writes for these first century Christians to take a reflective moment of where they were in their faith.

In Seminary we took a class about Cults and false teachings. How do you tell if it

if a religion is false? It is actually fairly simple. Ask the question what is man's problem and then ask- What is the solution to man's problem?

According to Scripture there is only one answer to each of those questions the rest are counterfeits. Here are the answers What is man's problem? People may say lack of education, unequal distribution of goods, poor upbringing, whatever their answer and there are many. Scripture says there is only one. What is it? All men have fallen short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23 When you fall short of God's glory in your life what is that called. Missing then mark. It is called SIN!!!!!!!!!! Sin is man's problem! It is your problem, It is My problem. The Apostle Paul said that he was the chief of sinners. 1 Tim 1:15 It was his problem too. Now how do we fix the sin problem.? University professors, gurus, shamans, you name it -if they say education, enlightenment, good living, reincarnation, being kind, pay money, getting in touch with your inner whatever, you get counterfeit religion that may do a lot of 'good' things, but provides no cure for the disease of sin!! For the only true answer to bridge the gulf created between us and God by sin is John 3:16. Jesus is the only way, the truth and the life. John 14:6 In Him is light and in Him is no darkness at all!! 1 John 1:5 Only one way to heaven through the power of the cross, Jesus says, "the way to darkness is wide"! The way to righteousness is what?? It's narrow. Matthew 7. We are saved only by the grace Ep. 8:9 filled blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for us. That grace responds to our heart cries of being a sinner in need of Jesus forgiveness.

Now Paul called out those at the church in Corinth, they either had started to take the wide path to destruction or they only had the appearance of being redeemed. Just like pieces of glass out in the narthex, entry way, that show the grape vine check out the grapes you can readily see the counterfeits the ones that are not the originals. My son in-law Keith, when we first met him, was in a fraternity at Uof M Dearborn. He was one of the student leaders, "a big man on campus". He set up big events that did good things for other people, but was he living his life for Christ? No, You see good will never be good enough, Sin needs to be cast out. because he had not believed on Jesus Christ and allowed Him to become the Lord of his life. When Christ calls us to His table we are to be like Him. He says "be pure as I am pure" Mat. 4:48 . Now can we become pure on our own, Nope!! But Jesus and the Holy Spirit can make us pure in the Father's sight.

I want to share a story with you! Now it was a communion Sunday at the Berville church. I was just a young pastor and experienced something strange— I took a swig of the juice from the little cup, and it had a sour kick to it!! Now we always used grape juice in the Methodist Church. So I wondered how this happened. After church I went to the tiny kitchen to help the elderly Mrs. Decker with dishes. Not wanting to be offensive, I casually asked, what brand of juice did they use? ^{my though} She responded, “Welch's of course.” Hmmm, “is it a new variety of grapes?” ^{a cheap french?} I asked further. “No, the same we have used for years.” So we use the Original variety of pasteurized Welchs. With only a dozen or so in attendance, I asked if we saved the unused juice to the next month. “yes, in the fridge”. I went and looked at the only one month old bottle. It had a layer of green across the top of the juice!! How could that have happened?? Then I saw Walt Decker her husband go to the electric panel and threw off the church main electrical breaker as he was leaving. It turned all lights including the fridge OFF! I suggested maybe she could take and use the unused portions and use them at her home in the future. The juice had been tainted, Just like the Gospel the people at Corinth had had been watered down or changed now leading them the wrong way. They were only a Church of light on Sunday! and tried under their own power, living with out God's power during the week.

^{A tidbit you may not know!}
There are two wonderful windows here at FCC that were designed only to be a feature of symmetry not of function. The function of a window is to let light in and in the case of Church windows also to let the light from within out . And these two window do neither! Not once have you seen light from the sun come in them, and not once has anyone witnessed the light from within this place shine out through them. And they are on the front of the church at eye level!

Now I want to ask you are you like a city on a hill that can not be hid? Does truly the light of Christ shine from you? Or are you like the two windows that only look like windows??

To Live in the power of God's love in His Holy Spirit, you and I need to have Jesus as our Lord and Savior. That means we confess our sins and believe on Him in faith that we are redeemed. If your not redeemed, if you have not asked Jesus to be the Lord of your life and not just window dressing— now is the time. As one evangelist would always say, “now is the appointed hour”! For you to come face to face with your redeemer. Today is the time to say no more just looking like a

believer it is time to be ONE! You want to know why God hasn't been the center of your life? Because you haven't let Him. You haven't ask Him in. Why your daily decisions don't have the conviction and drive of a God filled life, Some of you say God is my co-pilot. That's the problem you need to switch seats. Make Him the one in control. Today you can do that right here and now. Quit playing church, Come on this is your chance to leave all your sins behind. All the pettiness, all the church politics behind, this is the day that God can pick you up and bring you into His light!!. How serious am I? Very. Has your fire for God run cold? Or maybe never had the Holy Spirit burning in you. Come to Him now.

Just as some products have warning labels, The Apostle Paul mentions that some partakers of communion, who were not right with God, were getting sick. I don't want you to experience that, lets you and I bow our hearts to Jesus and confess our short comings in His will. Ask him to empower our living.

In the light of our time together lets look at that passage again.

Test and evaluate yourselves to see whether you are in the faith and living your lives as [committed] believers. Examine yourselves [not me]! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves [by an ongoing experience] that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test and are rejected as counterfeit? 2 Corinthians 13:5 AMP

Join me in prayer, repeat after me this simple prayer,

Come join me at the throne of God and partake at His table of grace. Amen.

