Unthinking Christians

 I recently saw an email appeal for prayers from a sister about her hospitalized brother. She wrote, he *“…is a Christian but after having been really hurt by some unthinking Christians, has not been back to church in about 40 years.”*

 All I can do is shake my head. How often have we heard something similar? Uncaring, unthinking, or unloving Christians drive away the very souls Christ has died to save. All his efforts, all his work, all his blood, undone. Imagine an artist creating beautiful works of art but being followed by a scoundrel who destroys the art before the paint even dries. Jesus is the Artist and He’s still working on us. The paint hasn’t yet dried. Are we protecting His works in progress or destroying them? We can spend hours talking about God’s grace and then make one harsh, hurtful comment and all the good can be undone.

 Am I surprised? No. Am I disheartened? Yes.

 I’m not surprised because we are *all* flawed. We *all* need help – including those who stand in judgment of others and intentionally or unintentionally drive them away. But I am disheartened because driving away those whom Christ has saved only leads to death. Life is found in Christ, only in Christ.

 C.S. Lewis once wrote that when we accept Christ, the road ahead immediately branches: One way leads to love, humility, and compassion for others who, like us, are beset with sin. The other way leads to spiritual pride, self-righteousness, and persecuting zeal. Which road are you on? Do you *draw* others to or *drive* them away from Christ?

 Jesus told a parable about those who were self-righteous and treated others with contempt. He said, “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayedthus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:9-14)

 Of course, the source of the problem is twofold. There are some “Pharisees” in local congregations. They feel themselves superior to their brothers and sisters. They make the mistake of comparing themselves to others rather than to Christ. They look down their noses at the flaws of their brethren, ignoring their own. Want a healthy dose of humility? Compare yourself to Christ. Ouch! This should humble even the most self-righteous amongst us.

 The other source of the problem is putting our faith in men rather than in Jesus. Get ready. Your brethren will disappoint you. Your brethren will hurt you. They will say and do things that are completely unlike the Son whom they claim to follow. But Jesus won’t. He will never disappoint. He will never betray. He will always do what’s in your best interest. Put your faith in Him and not in men. Don’t leave Him and His bride, the church, because of the harshness of the broken people He is still working to save.

 - Matt Hennecke, March 2023