**IN DEPTH BIBLE STUDY: SPIRITUALITY OF THE CROSS**

**CLASS 14 and POWER POINT 14:**

**The Theology of the Cross: THE HIDDENESS OF GOD:**

THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS (TOC) VS. THE THEOLOGY OF GLORY (TOG)

**THE HIDDEN LIFE:**

1. How does this all play out in ordinary life? How does faith and prayer and the hiddenness of God transform day to day living? That will be the focus on the next chapter. For now, it must be remembered that God is hidden. That is, He cannot be seen or experienced in the crosses we bear, He is nevertheless genuinely present, a presence grasped by faith.
2. Furthermore, the spiritual life is itself hidden. “For you died,” says St. Paul, and “Your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ your life, appears, then you will also appear with him in glory.” Colossians 3:3-4. United in Christ in baptism is hidden. At the resurrection and life eternal in heaven there will be no crosses. God will manifest everything clearly, and then be the time for glory. But for now the Christian’s life is hidden with Christ!
3. We have spoken much about justification, our being saved, but little about sanctification, the process in which a Christian grows in holiness. The next chapter will talk about Good Works (GW) and action in the world. The relationship between God and us is a matter of faith, not GW, and a large part of sanctification is growing in faith. This comes again, by trials and the cross in which the struggles of our life force us to grow in our dependence upon God, and thus cause us to grow. GW as will be seen are the spontaneous result of faith. Those who need more GWs need more faith, a deeper apprehension of the Gospel in order to produce them.
4. But sanctification, spiritual growth is no smooth process. Whether growth in GWs or grown in faith, both are implicit doctrines of GWs, the holiness of a Christian is not always evident. Failures, hypocrisies, doubts, lack of love, empathy, phoniness, egotistical pride, and secret sins of the flesh are well documented in Christian Churches (And yes even SJL, and each one of us!).
5. In fact, the church often seems like a weak and attenuated institution. Christians and church goers often seem little different from their non-Christian neighbors. Individual Christians have to admit these chargers in their own lives, and confess them daily. Their relationships with God vacillates daily from closeness to times when He seems absent, from time of spiritual energy to periods of dryness. Often little progress is evident, just one failure, then a fresh start, followed by another failure. If God is at work, shouldn’t we expect better than this?
6. Luther speaks of our ‘old person, being in conflict with our new person. The baptized converted sinner is given a new spirit, a new life in Christ through the indwelling of the HS. But the old sinful nature inherit in our fallen flesh remains. (See Galatians 5:16-26). These are in conflict, so that the Christian may still succumb to his sinful flesh, which in turn must be disciplines and resisted so that the ‘new man’ may grow in faith and love. Only at death when the flesh passes away will the conflict be resolved, with the regenerated nature attaining full perfection when it enters eternal life.
7. In the meantime, the new person in hidden. This is not just a matter, much less an excuse-of Christians failing in their calling. Their true status and identity before God is hidden even to themselves. God sees Christians through the prism of the cross. Our sins and failures are hidden by the blood of Christ; our ordinary lives are hidden, and we are robed by Christ’s righteousness. When God looks at a Christian, He sees Jesus. As St. Paul says, our lives are hidden “with Christ,” our sins are hidden in the cross and our righteousness hidden with Him. Our lives are hidden in effect from God. They are certainly hidden from ourselves and the world.
8. This is the basis of spiritual security. The Christians’ life is safely hidden away. Though L believe in the Laws message that a Christian refusing to repent and rejecting faith can fall away-yet the G banishes all fear. “The wind blowers wherever it pleases,” says The Lord. “You can hear its sound, but you can’t tell where it came from or where it’s going. So it is with all born of the Spirit.” (John 3:8). The HS is actively involved in the life of every Christian mysteriously changing hearts and acting in Word and Sacrament, ministering in trials and tribulations, creating someone who will stand before God, holy! But this process is not seen by the naked eye, nor can it be understood or tracked, nor is the Christian aware how far they’ve come.
9. The average church member may not seem very impressive as their faults are evident. They may lose their temper, be prone to gossip, and have a worldly streak. They may not even seem spiritual. And yet, their lives are hidden with Christ. Every Sunday they hear God’s Word of Judgment and grace. They examine themselves and receive the Lord’s Supper, God’s body and blood given for them. He may not be the best husband, but when his wife dies, He cries out in misery to God. Such folks say little but they exhibit a startlingly powerful faith when the chips are down.
10. It is common today to question if church goers are actually Christian and to dismiss, ‘dead churches.’ We expect spiritual dynamos. The church rolls main have unbelievers, there are churches that no longer preach the Gospel and are so dead (even though their church rolls are high!) There are spiritual giants that put the rest of us to shame. Nevertheless, to paraphrase C.S.L, the average person in the pew, to God be a blessed saint before whom if we only knew we would have the impulse to bow down. We can’t judge by appearances.
11. Nor can we judge by appearances when we suffer or when God seems distant and rejecting or not real at all. Nor when we judge by appearances when considering when bread, water and wine are used in a church service, or when the pastor reads before a book and proclaims words form a pulpit. If we were to judge by appearances would we believe that a Jewish carpenter is actually God in the flesh. His being tortured by death a Golgotha, judges strictly by appearances would be repulsive, a meaningless act of cruelty. We would never guess that It was the salvation of the world.
12. Next class, “**VOCATION,**” (The Spirituality of ordinary Life!)