

When our children were very young, we took them with us to the YMCA Pool for a class they called Diaper Dippers. Once they got over their fear of the water, the next class was Polywogs, then Fish, then Sharks. The idea was that if a toddler can walk, they should learn to swim, which is as essential as walking on 2 legs. The instructors explained to the children that the difference between People, Polywogs, Fish and Sharks is that those have GILLS to breathe, and we have to learn the SKILL to put our face in the water and lift or turn our head to breathe. There was one child, who stood at the edge for a long time as his parents down in the water cheered him to jump in and join them. He curled his toes over the edge of the concrete, and just as everyone thought he would give up, the child folded his hands together, closed his eyes, looked up and out-loud said a Prayer: "GOD GIVE ME SKILLS OR GIVE ME GILLS." What a great prayer! He did not ask "Make me the greatest Swimmer" or "I want Fins and a Tail" or "Protect me from my fears". He asked for what he needed, not for what he wanted. "Give me SKILLS or Give me GILLS".

Craig Barnes is a leader of the Festival of Preaching, a few years ago President of Princeton Seminary, who at one point said "Our calling as The Church is Not to Accomplish things, our calling is to trust GOD as we are led to places where we are way out of our depths." Give me skills or give me gills. Not give us everything we want,

BUT Give us what we need to endure in following GOD through life. I believe that is Wisdom.

Our Old Testament lesson is that Solomon was way over his head. His father was the best loved King of Israel David who conquered Giants, David who wrote the Psalms, David who built the City of Jerusalem, David who united the Tribes, David was the 1st Raider of the Lost Ark returning the Ark of the Covenant from the Philistines to Jerusalem. But David died, and Solomon's elder Brothers were killed, leaving the youngest, the only living child of David and Bathsheba Ordained & Coronated as King. Solomon was grieving. Solomon was lost, afraid of all the responsibility on his shoulders.

The author of the Book of Kings is kind to Solomon, describing "Solomon showed his love of the Lord by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, EXCEPT THAT Solomon offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places." There are many of us who describe, the most beautiful Sanctuary we know, the place we like to worship God, is in Nature. But Solomon was doing more.

Offering sacrifices and burnt offerings on the high places, was worshipping the ancient pagan gods.

David's final words to his son, as the King was dying, were to Not burn offerings and make sacrifices on those altars. As much as David is remembered through history as The Beloved King, Israel's Shepherd, when David saw what he wanted, he used his power to take it. David took the Kingdom from King Saul. David took Jerusalem. David took Bathsheba by killing Uriah. When Solomon's elder brother Absalom saw the evil of his brother Amnon, Absalom judged Amnon and killed him. To protect King David, his soldiers killed Absalom to protect David's power. Solomon recognizes he could have overwhelming POWER.

There is a reasonable answer for why Solomon was going to the high places to burn sacrifices... If he left Jerusalem, to go to the altars, atop the mountains, to offer sacrifices, no one can ask him to do anything! Cremating a Bull is not like cooking a steak! Every sacrifice would take days to burn down to ash, and he was offering 1000 burnt offerings at Gibeon. NOT in his burning offerings, but in a DREAM, GOD told Solomon "Ask what ever you want of me to give you." FREE WILL often has a bad connotation. GOD gave us Free Will in order that we could choose to love GOD, because without freedom of will, the choice would not actually be out of Love. Time and again throughout history, humanity exercised our FREE WILL and chose not GOD. But here, SOLOMON finally chose what he NEEDED not what he DESIRED or WANTED. "Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people, to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of GOD?" Give me SKILLS or Give me GILLS!

“Help us to TRUST GOD when we are led to places way out of our depths!”

And in response to a declaration of faith, an assurance that King Solomon’s FREE WILL shows his love for the LORD, GOD granted him both the Wisdom he needs and everything else he could have asked for.

Because of this passage from THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, early Christian believers were accused of Cannibalism, eating flesh and drinking blood! When what Jesus was offering was exactly what we NEED, rather than everything we WANT. Even during and after 40 Years in the Wilderness, our ancestors had not understood. They lived by their wants, believing they were following MOSES, instead of understanding Moses was leading them to Follow GOD! They ate MANNA, Bread that came from Heaven to survive from day to day, without perceiving that everything they NEEDED they were already receiving from GOD.

In addition to these being the Bible passages for today, I raise this before us because there is a movement being pushed through our society, a POLITICAL MOVEMENT, not by the Republicans or the Democrats... A movement seeking POWER by masquerading as Christianity by calling itself CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM. In the early 1930s an identical movement spread across Germany calling itself NATIONAL SOCIALISM or GERMAN CHRISTIANS.

NATIONAL SOCIALISM argued that there was NEGATIVE CHRISTIANITY which falsely preached LOVE, COMPASSION, FORGIVENESS, FIXATION ON SIN and REPENTANCE;

while the GERMAN CHRISTIANITY of NATIONAL SOCIALISM they labeled as POSITIVE CHRISTIANITY emphasizing THE POWER of POSITIVE THINKING, THIS-WORLDLY SUCCESS, FIGHTING AGAINST RELIGION. NATIONAL SOCIALISM called for removing the Old Testament from the Bible as too Jewish.

They claimed Jesus was not Jewish. They denied the VIRGIN BIRTH claiming Jesus was an illegitimate son of a German Soldier serving in the Roman Legion.

The GERMAN CHRISTIANS went so far as to commission BIBLES with a 5th GOSPEL... A Gospel which had NO MIRACLES, no MORAL TEACHINGS no WORK OF SALVATION, and no RESURRECTION!

Instead, in their version Jesus was an ARYAN HERO who battled against the Jews, until the Jews killed him! They shifted Christian attention away from the HUMANITY OF GOD to the DIVINITY OF MAN claiming Hitler was The Messiah/the individual Christ, the GERMAN CHRISTIAN NATION was the Body of Christ, and Christ was Judaism’s deadly opponent.

Exactly 90 years ago, in the Summer of 1934, THE CONFESSING CHURCHES OF GERMANY banded together with an Affirmation of Faith, written by the Traditional Christian Theologian Karl Barth that is called The Barmen Declaration, written at Barmen, Germany. The Barmen Confession has 6 points:

Jesus Christ testified to in Scripture is the Word of GOD, is GOD’s Revelation, the Church’s only Authority. Jesus Christ forgives our sins and claims our entire lives.

Jesus Christ acts in the Church through the Holy Spirit by means of GOD’S WORD and SACRAMENTS.

Offices in the Church are not a matter of POWER and RULE OVER OTHERS, rather they carry-out Ministry. GOD established the State to provide JUSTICE and PEACE; and GOD established the Church to bring people to GOD’s ETERNAL KINGDOM.

The Church’s MISSION is to deliver the message of the FREE GRACE of GOD to ALL PEOPLE.

CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM today is about POWER, ISOLATION FROM ANY WHO ARE DIFFERENT, DOMINATION & FEAR.

JESUS CHRIST preached WISDOM as THE WAY of UNDERSTANDING.

Jesus Preached LOVE, COMPASSION, MERCY and SELF-SACRIFICE.