



feeding . . . gathering . . . carrying . . . leading. (Isaiah 40:11)

October 24, 2013

Dear Church,

Stuart continued his Psalms Pseries on Sunday, this week focusing on the penitentiary Psalms (6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143). Because sin abounds, it is not unusual that these have been among the most recited Psalms in the Church through history. Stuart highlighted the vital role of confession in the Christian life, but broadened the category to include more than we would generally think of when we hear the word “confession.” Maybe some of our minds (depending on our background) think of a booth with a priest in it, but Stuart highlighted how confession happens in a community of believers as we confess to one another. We are not called to air our dirty laundry in public, or to confess our deepest sins to the person we just met, but there remains a vital place for confessing our sins, one to another. James 5:16 indicates that by this process we will “be healed.”

But the category of “confession” includes more than the confession of sins. The word “confess” literally means “to say the same thing”, in this case, “to say the same thing as God”. So when we confess our sins, we are agreeing with what God says about the nature of our sin, its offense against him and its detrimental effects on us. But there is another way we can “say the same thing” as God, namely, in worship. The Psalmists, though they are clear about the necessity of confessing our sin to God, are equally clear about the necessity of confessing our faith, which means quite the opposite of apologizing for it! In confessing our faith, we “say the same thing” about God that He says about himself, that He is holy, worthy, lovely, almighty, compassionate, just, and on and on (I pray you can add to this list yourself!).

Our confession of faith serves as the foundation for our confession of sin. It is by our confession of faith that we gain a proper perspective. It is only on account of God’s holiness that we realize our sin to be truly sin. Furthermore, with our confession of faith in view we realize that our sin is first against God, against his character and commands, before it is a sin against anyone else. But also fundamental to our confession of faith is our belief in God’s faithfulness, so that when we confess our sin we can be assured of his forgiveness. Without our confession of faith, we might end up feeling bad about something, but that doesn’t itself lead to repentance.

Jesus himself made a “good confession” (of faith, not sin!) before Pilate (1 Tim 6:12-13), and Paul used this as the model for Timothy, reminding him of the good confession he had made before a body of believers, encouraging Timothy to take hold of this confession more and more and to draw strength from it in his continuing ministry. Note from the example of Christ that we cannot expect our “good confession” to go unopposed.

Finally, confession of faith has two parts, on the one hand rooted in doctrine, and on the other hand expressed in doxology. To put it simply, we worship in truth. Have you made a good confession? Have you confessed the Lordship of Christ and the truth of his saving death and resurrection, of his offer of eternal life by faith in him? Is this something that leads you to a deeper and richer worship of God? And does all of this cause you to mourn your sin against this God, leading you to repentance?

May our confessions be true this week, whether they are about God or ourselves, and may our worship abound more and more to the God who is forever praised.

Rich blessings,
Ben

<http://www.christourshepherd.org/pastlet.htm> (and follow links to download MP3 audio of sermon)