



Dirty Jobs: Why They Matter

Titus 1:1-4

The Gospel comes to Crete! (Not exactly Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood)

The story of Titus is the story of Paul leaving one of his lieutenants in the Gospel, Titus, on the island of Crete, where he was to finish establishing and strengthening local churches (read house churches) on this notoriously pagan island. It's a story about Christianity permeating difficult and hard places. It's a story about the power of the Gospel to transform pagan Cretans and their culture into godly people who have been rescued and redeemed by Christ. It's a story about how revolutionary the Gospel is to the Cretan cultural narrative: that Jesus, not Zeus, has appeared; that Jesus, not the Roman Emperor, is the God and Savior. It's a story about the Gospel's ability to transform lives of those who were foolish and led astray into a people zealous for good deeds. It's a story about how the Gospel is not to exist in some island regional capital but to permeate the entire culture: "in every town." It's a story about how the Gospel is to be embedded in living communities of believers spreading around the island. In short, it's a story that tells about how a leader was left to deal with the trouble of confronting falsehoods on two fronts: (1) the morally free-for-all Cretans and (2) the religious legalists. This leader—Titus—was sent by Paul on an apostolic mission to further the faith of the fledgling believers. It's a story about the power of the Gospel to flourish in the most unlikely places on earth.

The Gospel is what makes "Dirty Jobs" worth doing! (Titus 1:1-4)

When God has called you to do the challenging and difficult and "dirty" job of furthering the Christian faith of others, that task is worth doing (in spite of how hard it is) because of the message of the Gospel itself. "Cretans looked for special appearances of the gods to intervene and save. But the Gospel says that the saving grace of God has already appeared in Jesus, and now we live in eager expectation of His final glorious appearing which will complete God's saving invention in our world. The Cretans looked in vain for a stoic method of training that would produce a virtuous life. The grace of God has that very effect, cultivating in us the virtues of self-control, right living and godliness." (Wieland)

In vv. 1-4, Paul wanted Titus to know that the contents of the letter are *authorized* contents. Paul, God's slave and Jesus' apostle, is about to share with Titus Gospel based

truth that leads to Gospel-based godliness. The issue here is that Titus needs to know what makes this dirty job worth doing. Paul is sending his deputy into the arena of conflict—which is what leadership is—and Titus needs to know that the stakes are worth it! What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the truth (“the unlying God”) that God’s final revelation is **Jesus**, who entered history in human flesh, suffered crucifixion for our rebellion, and was raised from death in a resurrection body! That body was raised from the tomb by the stunning, supernatural power of God—*operating* in history. This is the Gospel! The Bible never asks us to believe a lie. Based on this unchanging truth by the God who does not lie, we have hope that this life is not all there is. (Carson)

Thus, the Gospel defines who Paul is (“slave of God”) and determines what he is to do (“Apostle of Christ Jesus”; “through the preaching which has been entrusted to me”). Similarly, Titus is slave of God sent on an apostolic mission to make disciples. And so are we.

The Gospel lays bare my motives for leading others!

I think that Paul’s letter to Titus calls every Christian minister to rethink why he/she is in ministry! Ministry has to go beyond how I am perceived by the ministered; how much people like me; or people-pleasing. It has to be grounded in the truth of the Gospel! Do I really believe this amazing message that God appeared in flesh and walked on the earth; showing us, teaching us, living the life we were to live and dying our death for us? Titus is going to confront difficult situations—ungodliness, deceit, legalism. All he has going for him is truth, the Gospel.

Why do I do what I do for God? Is it for attention? Is it for ego? Is it for power? Or, is it for His fame? His reputation? That others may know Him? Do I truly believe that the Gospel is powerful enough to change a family, a community, a village, a town, an island? What is it that drives *you* to further the faith of others? Is it to help business? It’s a heavy question. And any answer that strays from Jesus’ glory is incomplete and insufficient. It’s an idol that will never satisfy.

The Gospel has the power to produce disciple-making churches out of selfish Cretans!

In Titus 3:14, Paul expected even these fledgling churches to be about supporting the world-wide spread of the Gospel! Paul wants the churches in Crete to help further the faith of others through supporting the work and ministry of Zenas and Apollos. "The saving grace of God that appeared in Christ for all people must now become visible in places where people are; even the most difficult places, unpromising settings, etc. like Crete! "Saving grace becomes visible when training grace does its work and shapes lives that witness to another reality." The message of the Gospel is worth working for and fighting for and struggling for because of its power to penetrate even the most hardened cultures; because of its ability to nurture authentic Christian lives. This letter makes it clear that the strength and the nature of the opposition make no difference: Christian teachers are to press on with their task of evangelism and of leading the converts into a lifestyle that brings glory to God.