

SERMON NOTES: AUG. 11TH

SCRIPTURE READINGS... I Corinthians 12: 1-, 12-26, Acts 15: 1-11

THE FIRST CHURCH FIGHT...an ugly fight erupts in the Early Church. Luke didn't edit it from his pages. Jewish Christians-ex-Pharisees-whom Jesus often accused of hypocrisy, were upset that non-Jews in Antioch were being baptized without 1st being circumcised. Did they first have to become Jewish before they can be Christian? Unlike the trivial stuff that many churches now discuss, it was a core issue

Who was welcome in the Jesus community!

Church leaders gather, thus creating the "1st official church meeting". Pharisees raised their voices and plead for tradition. There must be standards. Gentiles must obey Moses' Law. It is the only way to know who we are, how we belong to God. This is why legalism angered Jesus: we are more interested in being right than serving God. We can have the right opinion and still be wrong. If we don't love God/neighbor, who cares what our opinion on any subject is. Paul/Barnabas stood firm: Gentiles didn't need circumcision; one isn't saved by physical act but only by God's grace in Christ. It is tough to let God be God, to trust his grace! We want parameters, controls, and restrictions. Traditions are fine but what would now define God's people wasn't a surgical ritual but knowing/loving Jesus. What used to identify us as God's people had been replaced. Jesus now defines us and Jesus is enough!

SEEKING GOD'S WILL...emotions ran high; debate was sharp; they sorted out WHAT GOD WANTED, not just WHAT THEIR OPINION WAS. Despite their differences, they knew God was up to something. Their job was to find out what it was. We won't find God's will by taking polls to discern what is popular. We seek God in prayer, "What is it, Lord, you want from us" God speaks not only through persons but through community. That's why we listen to each other even if listening isn't easy. Antioch didn't tweet NASTY MESSAGES to Jerusalem church. They didn't go rogue or leave to start a new church. They didn't hire a consultant to solve their problems. They prayed and trusted God. They found God's will by staying open to the Spirit instead of closing their minds. They honored the Apostles, recalling that they would've never heard Gospel had it not been for them. There is a lesson here for us: conflict wasn't about 1 SIDE WINNING, or having the LAST WORD, but listening for GOD'S WORD, and seeking WHAT GOD WANTS.