



Abundant Life Christian School

MS/HS Chapel: "How can Christianity be Good . . . " with Pastor Tom Flaherty

This is a summary of the key points of Pastor Tom's talk on 'How can Christianity be good when it makes me intolerant?'

This is the chapel for middle & high school students from April 16, 2020.

I. **Is Christianity Good?**

- a. *Is God good?* 1 John 1:5 says "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all."
 - *God's own definition of His glory is His goodness.
 - *People can be nice but have a dark side – God doesn't have a dark side.
 - James 1:20 - "Human anger does not bring the righteousness of God." God's anger is perfect and it establishes righteousness and justice when it is expressed. God is more beautiful than everything He has created.
- b. Jesus Christ was the perfect revelation of God. There is no character in all of history that shines as brightly as Jesus.
 - i. He loved everyone and those that were the most sinful were drawn to Him.
 - *The calling of Matthew – (Matt 9:9) "follow me, and he got up and followed Him."
 - *The Chosen
 - *The woman caught in adultery: neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.
 - ii. He didn't just tell us to forgive each other, but He forgave those who crucified Him: Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.
 - *There's no one like this except those who have tried to follow His example.
 - iii. Don't do good cop, bad cop with God. The Father is mean, Jesus is nice – no, Jesus said the words He spoke were the Father's and the deeds of compassion He did were the Father's.
- c. *If God is good why does evil exist?* *In His foreknowledge God chose to create us any way. Instead of removing evil and starting over, He chose from the beginning to redeem, and by redeeming to show who He is not only to mankind but also to the angelic realm. God in Christ, bore our evil and our punishment on the cross, so that we would be placed on the ground of redemption.
- d. In the Old Covenant, God restrained evil through judgment while giving the promise of redemption. In the New Covenant, God releases blessing through redemption in Christ. God is not holding the world's sin against them but inviting everyone to Himself through Christ. He is allowing evil now and inviting us to choose Him in the darkness – we don't have to prove anything to anyone – we're witnesses, not the counselor. A day is coming when He will judge this world and remove evil. He has delayed this because He desires everyone to repent and come to the knowledge of the truth. He is kind and patient and continues to chase people down even when they've said no to Him.

II. Is Christianity Intolerant?

- a. Tolerance: "the ability or willingness to tolerate something, in particular the existence of opinions or behavior that one does not necessarily agree with."
Jesus did not come to condemn the world, He came to save it. He loves everyone equally regardless of where they were born, what religion they practice, or what sexual orientation they lean toward.
 - i. He loves them.
 - ii. He died for them.
 - iii. He invites them into His salvation.
- b. Have Christians been intolerant? Often times blindly intolerant and sometimes willfully intolerant, but Jesus didn't make them that way.
 - *My brother was venting his anger at Christians – the things you're angry about were the very things Jesus was angry about.
 - *Pride is blinding, but there's no pride more blinding than religious pride. "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity."
 - *Paul said he knew in part, we need to hold our opinions on non-essentials with humility.
 - *We are called to love our enemies as the greatest proof that we're the children of God.
 - *Matthew 9:13 - "Go learn what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the self-righteous, but sinners."
- c. *But don't Christians think they're right and that all other religions are wrong?* We didn't make the message, we only are allowed to join the message. John 14:6 - The nature of truth is that it is narrow.
 - *Jesus Himself asked if there was another way.
 - *Some answers are closer than others.
 - *One way to God, but many ways to Jesus – God is drawing Muslims all over the world and the fastest growing church is in Iran.
- d. Jesus has been given the right to judge the human race, not you. He is the Lamb that was slain so only He breaks the seals that bring about the day of the Lord.
John 3:19 - "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil."