

Building A Both-And Church Rather Than An Either-Or Church

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Social Justice: Let Justice Roll Down Series

Luke 10:25-37; 15:11-32

Some of the great advertising campaigns in history have pitted one side against the other concerning a particular product. Probably the most famous is the Miller Lite commercial,

Taste great; less filling

Of course, their point is, “Why not both?”

Or look at American politics where politicians in the Republican Party and the Democratic Party have to cater to their most extreme supporters. Politicians on the left and right almost always sound like the beer commercial: Taste great; less filling. You are either pro-labor or pro-business. You can't be both. Congressman Tony Hall, the 12-term Congressman from Dayton, who spoke here last week, confounds all the stereotypes we have of the political categories. He is a Christian and a politician. He is pro-life and a Democrat. You can't be both.

But if you look back on the history of the church, the church has always run into problems when it rejected Both-And thinking in favor of either-or thinking. In the early church as Christians in the first few centuries studied their Bibles there were two great questions they debated. The questions were: Who is God? And who is Jesus? And concerning the first big question, who is God, as the early Christians read the words of the Jewish Bible, which became their Bible, they came across the central prayer of Judaism, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.” And Christians said, “Well, it's clear from so many passages in the Bible that God is one.” We are not poly-theists like the pagans who worshipped dozens of Gods. We Christians, like Jews, are mono-theists. We worship only one God.

But at the same time, they read passages in the New Testament like Jesus' Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20:

Matthew 28:19-20

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

And they said, “It is also clear from the Bible that there is a complexity in the unity of God. The Father in the Bible is divine; the Son is divine; the Spirit is divine – so God is three. God is three; God is one – which is it?”

Some people in the early church emphasized the three-ness of God so much and so under-emphasized God's oneness, that for all practical purpose they worshipped three Gods and they became tri-theists – three God worshippers.

Some people on the other hand so emphasized God's oneness and so under-emphasized God's three-ness, that for all practical purposes they said that God just wears a different mask at different times. Sometimes God is the Father; sometimes God is the Son; and sometimes God is the Spirit. And they sort of mixed and matched the persons of God. The Father became the Son; the Son became the Spirit, but there was no distinction in their persons. This early Christian heresy, if you are interested it was called modalism. God simply shows up in three different forms or modes, but he is not eternally Father, Son and Spirit.

The great majority of the early church said, "No. We're not going to chose between what the Bible says regarding God being one and what the Bible says about God being three – Both-And. And they came up with the word "Trinity" to describe God's oneness by virtue of having a common substance, or common being, and God's three-ness by virtue of the distinction of the persons. God is three persons of one substance – both three and one.

And likewise, to the second great question – Who is Jesus, some people in the early church focused on Jesus' humanity. We read passages in which Jesus got tired; he got hungry; he had a body; he ate; he slept; he died. Other people focused on Jesus' divinity. He is called Lord; he's called God; he's worshipped; we pray to Jesus. So, is Jesus a man or is Jesus God?

The great majority of the early church said that, "From studying the Bible we conclude that Jesus is both. Jesus is both totally man and totally God. Both- and."

And friends, so many of the controversies in the church historically have been the result of the church adopting the either-or thinking rather than Both-And thinking. Does God predestine us or do we have real responsibility? The answer is Both-And. The Bible teaches that God does predestine and the Bible teaches that we human beings are responsible for the choices we make. Both-and. The Bible is both a product of divine inspiration and human authorship. The kingdom of God is both already and not yet. Creation is both good and it is fallen. Both-And. Both-And. Both-And.

We are hosting a Justice Revival here at Vineyard Columbus on April 16-18th.

April 16-18 Revival Meeting
April 19 Serve Columbus

We are joining together with several dozen other local churches. Vineyard Columbus, along with First Church of God, pastored by Bishop Timothy Clarke, is co-hosting this event. And even the title Justice Revival is a Both-And title. By Justice we mean

improving the condition of people in this world. By Revival we're talking about the need of individuals to come into a personal relationship with Jesus. We want to have a Both-And event; an event that encourages people to improve the condition of folks in this world and to come into a relationship with Christ.

Want to read more about this event especially if you have questions? Pick up a copy of the insert or go online to www.vineyardcolumbus.org.

But the moment we start talking about poverty, which is what the Revival is going to focus on – the issue of poverty in our community and poverty in the world – folks in the either-or camp begin to get nervous. So there are a few pro-lifers, who say if you talk about poverty that means that you are no longer pro-life and you don't care about the unborn. Now, I've never been able to figure that out. Why must it be either-or? Why can't it be Both-And? Why can't we as a church advocate for all the marginalized in our society – the innocent unborn in the womb, and their already born mothers, brothers and sisters – why not both?

Why can't we pro-lifers be honest and say that one major reason that some women get abortions is because they are afraid they can't provide for their unborn child. So reducing poverty can be a major pro-life program. And, by the way, we have empirical evidence that this is the case. We've seen that in our church. As Vineyard Columbus has made a commitment to provide assistance and help, apartments and clothes, and job assistance for pregnant women who are poor in our community, last year alone Vineyard's pro-life ministry was able to rescue 200 babies from being aborted. 200. Just last year, 200 children are alive and have the potential to make a difference in this world, and relate to God, to love other people because this church decided to not only protest abortion, but to actually reduce the number of abortions by supporting poor mothers who were open to keeping their babies, but who believed that there was no way out for them other than abortions.

200 children are alive because of Vineyard Columbus' pro-life ministry. This is something to celebrate. Poverty reduction and pro-life. Both-And.

Both-And thinking has been at the heart of this church since its beginning. I wrote a book about this 13 years ago called Empowered Evangelicals. At that time, I said that we were trying to be a church and the Vineyard is trying to be a movement that is both biblically rooted and Holy Spirit empowered. Evangelical and charismatic. Both-and. Both-And.

So, in getting us ready for this Justice Revival, I've called today's message, "Building a Both-And Church Rather Than An Either-Or Church." Let's pray.

Now, one place we really see either-or thinking in the 21st century concerns evangelism and social action. Some conservative churches say, "The church has one job; saving souls." Getting involved in trying to improve the world by running free medical clinics and feeding hungry people as we do here at the Vineyard is like rearranging the deck

chairs on the Titanic. The ship is going down. Stop wasting your time trying to improve this world. Instead, we ought to devote all our resources and all of our time to preaching the gospel and saving people from the judgment of hell.

Some liberal churches, on the other hand, say, “What’s the point of preaching the message of salvation, when 30,000 children around the globe die every day from hunger and preventable diseases?” Forget about preaching the way you do at Vineyard Columbus where you call people to put their faith in Christ all the time. That’s just pie in the sky when you die by and by. Why don’t we simply roll up our sleeves and make this world a better place? It’s either evangelism or social action. It’s either meet the needs of people’s souls, or meet the needs of people’s bodies. Either get people ready for what they’re going to face when they die, or take care of people while they are still alive.

Any time you hear this kind of either-or thinking, or read something in the paper, or in an email that is filled with either-or thinking, you should say, “No. That’s simply not the heart of Jesus. The heart of Jesus is Both-And.” How about both rescuing people from the hell of God’s judgment and rescuing folks from their hellish existence in this world now? How about loving people enough to care about their bodies and loving people enough to care about their souls? How about creating a church that reaches out and hugs the world with both arms. That we reach around people with the arm of evangelism, in which we share the message of Jesus’ death on the cross as the full and final sacrifice for our sins, so that all one needs to do is trust in Christ and his sacrificial death in order to be right with God, but reach around people with the other arm – the arm of justice where we help to relieve people’s needs for health care, meaningful work, education for their children, and where we welcome immigrants. Why not hug the world with both arms – the arm of evangelism and the arm of social action.

Why build a Both-And church rather than an either-or church?

Because the Bible teaches Both-And Christianity

From beginning to end the Bible is a Both-And book. There are two tables to the Ten Commandments, not just one. The first four commandments concern our responsibility to God. And the last six commandments are about our responsibility to other people. Both-and. Worship God and respect people.

Think about the prophets. They aimed at people’s vertical sins, folks’ violation of the first table of the commandments, and they also aimed at horizontal sins, people’s violations of the second table of the commandments.

In the ministry of Elijah, there are two great confrontations: one on Mt. Carmel in a 1 Kings 18 in which Elijah confronted the prophets of the fake God Baal. So Elijah confronted idolatry. And in 1 Kings 21 Elijah traveled to Jezreal to confront King Ahab for his injustice in stealing a field owned by a man named Naboth and murdering Naboth. Elijah confronted idolatry and injustice. So there is this great confrontation by Elijah regarding the horizontal sin of injustice. And if you read through the Old Testament, you

will find everywhere these two sins are confronted by the prophets – idolatry on the one hand and injustice on the other. The prophets hit with both fists – vertical and horizontal; Both-And.

And you see Both-And thinking in that famous verse in Micah 6:8:

Micah 6:8

He has shown all you people what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Towards people we are to act justly and love mercy. Towards God we are to walk humbly. Both-and; Both-And. You hear it in the preaching of the prophet Jeremiah. Why was God going to destroy Jerusalem through the Babylonian invasion? What was Jerusalem's sin?

Jeremiah 19:4

For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned incense in it to gods that neither they nor their ancestors nor the kings of Judah ever knew, and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent.

Idolatry and Injustice.
Both-And.

Jesus, of course, most clearly taught about the importance of Both-And thinking when he preached about the two great commandments.

Matthew 22:34-38

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. 35 One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: 36 “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” 37 Jesus replied: “ ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment.

Now Jesus could have stopped there. He could have said that you have one single duty in this world – to love and serve God. But he didn't stop there. He went on to say,

Matthew 22:39-40

And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

So, you can't say, “Well, I have wonderful prayer times with God. I go to church every week. I tithe. I sing my heart out to God in worship. That all satisfies God. So it doesn't matter how I relate to my parents; or how I relate to my kids or to my spouse, or my elderly relative in a nursing home.” There are two great commandments, not just one. We followers of Jesus are called to both love God and love people. Both-And.

There are two beams on the cross – horizontal and vertical. This forms a picture of how the cross reconciles us vertically to God and how the cross reconciles us horizontally to each other. Both-and. All the apostles taught this. For instance, we read in James 1:27,

James 1:27

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Compassion towards the weak and holiness towards God – we are not permitted to choose one over the other. We're always tempted to say, "Well, which is more important?" God says, "I want both!" The great temptation is to say, "I'm making such a great difference in this world by feeding hungry people that God no longer cares about what I do sexually." God wants hungry people fed, and he wants your sex life cleaned up. Both-and.

It is wonderful that you've adopted a child through World Vision. But God also cares about your gossip. With God it is always Both-And – personal and social; vertical and horizontal.

Why build a Both-And church rather than an either-or church?

Because the great revivals in history displayed Both-And Christianity

If you look at the high water marks in the church's history when the church was displaying best God's will on earth, the great times of revival, there were always Both-And times. Christians have always been at their best when they've been Both-And Christians. In the 18th century during the time of what was called The Great Awakening, or the evangelical revival, John Wesley, who was the founder of the Methodist Church, was both a preacher of the gospel and a prophet of social righteousness.

Wesley used to preach in the open air to coal miners before they went down into the mines. He saw thousands of people come to Christ. And he fought against the evils of alcoholism, child labor, hunger, and slavery.

George Whitefield, who was a partner with Wesley in his preaching at the beginning of the Great Awakening, was one of the greatest preachers of the gospel in church history. Tens of thousands of people in England and in the US came to Christ through his preaching. But George Whitefield also gave a substantial amount of his fortune away and was constantly raising money to start orphanages in the US and in England to care for orphans.

Both-And Christians.

And in the second Great Awakening during the 19th century there was a great preacher named Charles Finney. Finney, by the way, started Oberlin College. He was a lawyer. Praise God, by the way, for lawyers. Throughout church history many of the great preachers were trained in law. Tertullian back in the 3rd century was a lawyer. John Calvin in the 16th century was a lawyer. Finney was a lawyer. I'm a lawyer. Something about studying the law seems to make us lawyers want to preach grace.

But Finney not only called people to Christ, but once they came to Christ he signed people up for the cause of abolition. Here's what Finney said during one of his revivals. After calling people to Christ and salvation, he said:

The great business of the church is to reform the world...the church of Christ was originally organized to be a body of performers. The very profession of Christianity implies the profession and virtual oath to do all that can be done for the universal reformation of the world.

You certainly see this Both-And approach in the life of William Wilberforce, who if you haven't seen the movie *Amazing Grace*, it is out in video, see it. It is a fantastic movie. It has great production values. It is really well done. It is not a cheesy religious film. But Wilberforce was a member of Parliament for many years. He worked to abolish the slave trade. Around Wilberforce was gathered a number of men that lived in a village south of London called Clapham. So the men gathered around Wilberforce were called The Clapham Sect. And these 19th century English Christians founded the modern Sunday School movement that teaches children the Bible on Sunday mornings. They started the Church Missionary Society and the Foreign Bible Society to print Bibles in different languages.

But they also battled against slavery and dueling which was popular, and cruelty to animals. They started the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

Great Christians throughout history have always been Both-And Christians. The high water marks in Christian history have always shown the church to be a Both-And church.

Why create a Both-And church rather than an either-or church? Because the Bible teaches it; because the great revivals displayed it; and,

Because missionaries practiced Both-And Christianity

You know, the model for missionaries was established in the 19th century as a person who goes out with a Bible in one hand and a bag of medicine in the other. Missionaries went to Ghana and introduced coffee and cocoa growing to families and individuals on their own land so that families could have a crop that they could sell for their own support and survival. One missionary went to Thailand and preached the gospel to folks living in the northern villages and he eliminated small pox and malaria and leprosy

in Northern Thailand. Wells were dug. Medical clinics were set up. And the gospel was preached.

We must never allow anyone to say, “Well you know, if the Vineyard starts getting involved with justice and poverty, you are going to stop preaching the gospel.” Great Christians and great churches throughout history have been Both-And churches, not either-or churches.

So the Bible teaches Both-And Christianity. And the great revivals of the church displayed Both-And Christianity. And the great Christian missionaries practiced Both-And Christianity. Then why have we gotten to the place where so many evangelicals and charismatics think that social justice is done only by members of mainline and liberal churches. Our job is to just evangelize; to just save people. And so many mainline and liberal churches say that the job of the church is not to try to convert people in their relationships with God. Our job is to simply reform the world.

The last century has been the low watermark in the church for Both-And Christianity. We have experienced in the last century what some people call the Great Divorce.

The sad story of the great divorce

The great divorce is not a divorce of husbands and wives. The great divorce that took place in America over the last hundred years has been the divorce between evangelism and social action. Let me give you a little bit of history here.

How did we come to the place where the evangelical churches and charismatic churches are suspicious about things like justice revivals? They are nervous about much talk regarding helping the poor, or improving the condition of people in society. Let me speak from the evangelical side because that is the side we are coming from in the Vineyard. Let mainline churches speak for themselves. Let me give you a little history behind the great divorce of evangelism and social action.

A hundred years ago lots of orthodox Christians felt themselves under attack from theological liberalism. The Bible was under attack especially from seminaries in Germany. So orthodox Christians felt themselves backed up against a wall and they became preoccupied with defending the gospel. They were concerned that the message regarding who Christ was and what he did for us and how we can come into relationship with God was going to be swept away by this tide of liberalism.

So these orthodox Christians wrote a bunch of books and titled them The Fundamentals declaring what they believed orthodox Christianity required. The people who subscribed to the teachings of these books became known as Fundamentalists. That’s what the name Fundamentalist comes from – it comes from the books titled The Fundamentals. They were written just before the beginning of WWI.

And then these orthodox Christians also reacted to what was called the social gospel at the time. There was a preacher and seminary professor named Walter Rauschenbusch who said essentially that the task of the church is not to get people ready for heaven. The task of the church is to transform life here on earth into the harmony of heaven. And he taught that we Christians could establish the kingdom of God here on earth by ourselves. We didn't need the intervention of Jesus.

So orthodox Christians reacted to this because nowhere in Rauschenbusch's thinking was there a need to be born-again, to see the kingdom of God the way Jesus taught. There was no room in Rauschenbusch's social gospel for the cross, no room for a Savior, no room for human beings to kneel before the cross in repentance in order to get right with God. So if there was something social being preached, orthodox Christians began to associate that with the so-called social gospel which was really no gospel at all.

And then through the orthodox portion of the church, a new teaching spread called dispensationalism. Many dispensationalists taught that essentially the world was going to get worse and worse before Jesus came. The world was like the Titanic; it was going down and there was no sense in trying to improve the world. In fact, some orthodox Christians rejoiced when they saw the spread of immorality, wars, and global disasters. They said, "This is great because it means that Jesus is coming back soon. Let's not do anything to slow down Jesus' coming."

So the orthodox Christians became defensive towards the world. They associated social justice with the liberals and they said let's not waste our time feeding hungry people, or building hospitals for the sick. As so many conservative Christians over the last century, they missed the Both-And thinking of the Bible and the Both-And approach of the great Christians of the past, and the Both-And practices of the missionaries.

But you know what's happening, brothers and sisters? The Spirit of God is at work throughout the world healing this great divorce. And all over the world there are churches like Vineyard Columbus that are saying, "We are tired of fighting our great grandfather's fight – fundamentalist v. mainline. That is no longer our fight." We've got a lot of issues that we must deal with, but the fight of a hundred years ago is no longer our fight. We are going to embrace the world with two arms – the arm of evangelism and the arm of social justice.

And we've been working at Both-And Christians, brothers and sisters, for at least 20 years. At our free medical clinic we provide free medical services and we help people find Jesus. At our food pantry we give hungry people food for their bodies and we offer people prayer for their souls. At our after school program we teach math and on different days of the week we teach the Bible. In this building we have a community center and we have a church.

This Both-And approach is so fundamental to Vineyard Columbus that if you don't get this, you don't get us. You don't know what we're all about. So, let me finish with a

brief reflection on the two great parables from the gospel of Luke: the parable of the prodigal son and the parable of the good Samaritan. And these two great parables of Jesus, probably the two greatest parables of Jesus, form twin towers of the Both-And thinking of the Bible – evangelism and social action. So let’s compare these two parables quickly.

The Prodigal Son

The Good Samaritan

In Luke 15 we read this:

Luke 15:11-15

Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. 13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. 14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.

Now concerning the prodigal, we would say that he is

The Prodigal Son

The Good Samaritan

He was a victim of his own sin

Why was the prodigal in the condition that he was? Mainly it was because he was a rebel, because of his own choices, because of his own decisions. The prodigal hurt himself by running away from his father and squandering his father’s gifts and his father’s wealth.

Then in Luke 10:30 we read this:

Luke 10:30

In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

Now what was the problem of this man?

The Prodigal Son

The Good Samaritan

He was a victim of his own sin

He was a victim of the sins of others

The man in the road was the “sinned against.” He was abused. And you know, when we see someone in trouble, it is often both. We are victims of our own sin. We are in trouble because we chose to use drugs. We chose to be lazy in school. We chose to neglect our spouses. And then we can be victims of the sins of others – sexual abuse, or the divorce of our parents.

And brothers and sisters this is the case when we look at poverty in America. So often the political right and the political left want to take poverty and make it an either-or issue. They say, "Either the cause of poverty is the failure of personal character, and a failure personal morals," or "the causes of poverty are social and structural." Now the political left won't acknowledge, it just won't, that personal decisions play into poverty. Out of wedlock pregnancies and promiscuity, the abuse of alcohol – these are all causes of poverty. The Bible tells us that there is a personal moral dimension to poverty.

The political right won't acknowledge that there is also a social and a structural dimension to poverty. America's racial history and the structure of our laws and the steering of people into certain areas of town and the pooling of poverty, poor schools, neighborhoods of gangs, the skewed ways that executives grab 300 or 500 times the average wage of their workers and shut factories down while taking the lion's share of wealth for themselves. There are social causes to poverty. And the Bible clearly lays that out. Just read the Old Testament prophets.

We can be in trouble because of our own sins. We can be in trouble because we're the sinned against. We can be in trouble because of both. But the prodigal son would be the best model for personal sin and the Good Samaritan would be the best model for social sin.

The Prodigal Son

He was a victim of his own sin
He modeled personal sin

The Good Samaritan

He was a victim of the sins of others
He modeled social sin

In both parables we find God's love. In the prodigal, we find God's love for the lost.

The Prodigal Son

He was a victim of his own sin
He modeled personal sin
God loves the lost

The Good Samaritan

He was a victim of the sins of others
He modeled social sin

Here is what we read in Luke 15:20:

Luke 15:20

So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

We have in Luke 15:20 a picture of the waiting father, the watching father, the compassionate father, the running father, the embracing father, the affectionate father. Here was a man who was lost because of his own sin. We know this one, don't we? We wander away from God our Father all the time. And we find ourselves alienated

from him in a distant country. We often feel far from God. Maybe today you feel far from God. It is no one else's fault other than that you and I wander away.

You know, the far country, the distant country into which we wander can just as easily be a wealthy suburb as it could be an inner city. We can be lost in an urban area. We can be lost in suburbia. You can just as easily wander away from God by pouring your life into golf as you can be lost by drug abuse or pornography. You can wander away from God by spending our entire lives focused on career advancement or fixing up our homes, or our investments and we can be lost from God by spending every day in front of the TV watching soap operas.

But God our Father in heaven is the watching father. He is watching for you. He is waiting for you to just turn around and begin to face towards him. But God our Father runs towards the lost. He embraces all who come back to him. He showers us with his affection. And in the parable of the good Samaritan we see that God loves the least.

The Prodigal Son

He was a victim of his own sin

He modeled personal sin

God loves the lost

The Good Samaritan

He was a victim of the sins of others

He modeled social sin

God loves the least

Here is what we read in Luke 10:33-35:

Luke 10:33-35

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

Throughout history people have seen Jesus in the guise of the Samaritan, Jesus. Jesus comes where we are. Jesus takes pity on us. He bandages us up. He brings us back to the church where we can be cared for and provided for. Certainly, in the parable of the good Samaritan we recognize God's love reaching out for the least. His heart is for broken people who are being abused in the Darfur, God loves people who are lonely and isolated in nursing homes, or abused in prisons, or who are lonely and abused and had to run away to be in a battered women's shelter, or who have not yet left batterers – women who are being attacked and abused. In both cases there is salvation. For the lost and the least, God offers salvation.

The Prodigal Son

He was a victim of his own sin

He modeled personal sin

God loves the lost

He was rescued by forgiveness

The Good Samaritan

He was a victim of the sins of others

He modeled social sin

God loves the least

The prodigal is rescued by forgiveness. Luke 15:22-24:
God our father forgives us – what an extraordinary truth. That God will separate us from our sin; in fact, he places our sins on his Son Jesus and tells us we can go free.

Luke 15:22-24

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. 24 For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

And the man in the road is rescued by charity and acts of justice.

The Prodigal Son

He was a victim of his own sin
He modeled personal sin
God loves the lost
He was rescued by forgiveness

The Good Samaritan

He was a victim of the sins of others
He modeled social sin
God loves the least
He was rescued by charity and justice

In both cases there is resistance to God’s love and God’s rescue. In both cases there is someone who doesn’t like the Both-And approach of Jesus. In the case of the prodigal, there is an older brother who is angry that the father is so welcoming to the lost. He made his bed, now let him lie in it the older brother would say. The chickens have come home to roost. Make him pay. Don’t receive him back. The older brother could be an example of people who are opposed to the preaching of the gospel of free and full grace.

The Prodigal Son

He was a victim of his own sin
He modeled personal sin
God loves the lost
He was rescued by forgiveness
Some refuse the call of evangelism

The Good Samaritan

He was a victim of the sins of others
He modeled social sin
God loves the least
He was rescued by charity and justice

“This is too good, God. People will abuse your grace if you say that all can have it; no matter what you’ve done you can come to Christ. It doesn’t matter how badly you’ve messed up. It doesn’t matter how badly you’ve messed up, you can come back to Christ. As long as you are willing to leave your sins behind, come the cross.”

And the man in the parable of the good Samaritan we also find opponents. There is also opposition. There is a priest and a Levite, religious leaders, it says, who took a wide berth around the man who is lying in the road. They didn’t want to see him. So we see in them a picture of opposition to social justice.

The Prodigal Son

He was a victim of his own sin

The Good Samaritan

He was a victim of the sins of others

He modeled personal sin
God loves the lost
He was rescued by forgiveness
Some refuse the call of evangelism

He modeled social sin
God loves the least
He was rescued by charity and justice
Some refuse the call of social justice

And there are many people today who are religious, who are church goers, but who say that the fact that there are people lying in the road, that's not my business. It's not the business of Christianity. I'm busy with religion. I'm busy with worship and taking communion and praying. I share my faith, so I don't need to worry about the tens of millions of people in Africa who are dying of AIDS, or the millions of millions of AIDS orphans there. I don't need to think about that the fact that today 30,000 children are going to die of hunger and preventable diseases around the world. That's not my concern. Or that one out of every six people in Franklin County live below the poverty line. Or tens of millions of people have very limited access to health care in America. That's not my issue. I have accepted Jesus in my heart. I'm going to heaven. I don't need to concern myself with the issue of poverty.

But Jesus says, "It is your issue." Loving people in both body and soul is our issue. Rescuing the lost and rescuing the least is what we're about. Loving people who are victims of their own sin and loving people who are victims of other people's sins is what the church is called to. Both-and. That's the kind of church God is building here at Vineyard Columbus. Let's pray.

Building a Both-And Church Rather Than An Either-Or Church

Rich Nathan

April 5-6, 2008

Social Justice: Let Justice Roll Down Series

Luke 10:25-37; 15:11-32

I. Both-And v. Either-Or thinking in church history

II. Why build a Both-And church?

- A. Because the Bible teaches Both-And Christianity (1 Kings 18, 21; Micah 6:8; Mathew 22:34-40; James 1:27)
- B. Because the great revivals displayed Both-And Christianity
- C. Because missionaries practiced Both-And Christianity

III. Why are churches today either-or churches?

- A. The sad story of The Great Divorce

IV. Both-and Christianity in the parables of Jesus

The Prodigal Son

- 1. He was a victim of his own sin
- 2. He modeled personal sin
- 3. God loves the lost
- 4. He was rescued by forgiveness
- 5. Some refuse the call of evangelism

The Good Samaritan

- 1. He was a victim of the sins of others
- 2. He modeled social sin
- 3. God loves the least
- 4. He was rescued by charity and justice
- 5. Some refuse the call of social justice