

God's Independence

1Corinthians 1:18-25

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity, July 1, 2018

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

If ever there were an incommunicable attribute of God, it is His independence.

It is not just God is not where we think He ought to be. It is that God chooses not to be where we think He ought to be. It is not just that God does things we think He ought not to do. It is that He does them because we think that He ought not to do them.

God is independent because He is the creator of all things. Everything is dependent upon Him. Yet man in His folly and weakness wants to make God dependent upon man so that man may call the shots with God. God will have no such thing. And the reason that God will have no such thing is that God is God.

The latest in religious thinking is therapeutic moral deism.

Therapeutic moral deism believes that God exists. Therapeutic moral deism believes that God instructs on the difference between right and wrong. Therapeutic moral deism believes that God comforts people when they need it.

Therapeutic moral deism does not believe in sin. Therapeutic moral deism does not believe that God punishes sin either in the life to come or in this life. Therapeutic moral deism therefore does not believe in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. The crucifixion of our Lord looks like foolishness to therapeutic moral deism. The crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ looks like weakness to therapeutic moral deism. Therapeutic moral deism therefore has no room or time for the crucifixion of Jesus. Therefore therapeutic moral deism has no room for Christ. It is not Christian, even though it says it is Christian.

Therapeutic moral deism is a result of the false metanarrative of evolution. Evolution gave our civilization an explanation of the existence of life that did not involve a creator God. Once the creator God was gone, there was no more judgment on sin in the thoughts and beliefs of people in western civilization. Once judgment was gone, sin was gone. Death was no longer God's punishment on sin. It was a necessary part of the evolutionary process. Once judgment and sin were removed and death was redefined western civilization found that it had no use for Jesus Christ. The crucifixion of our Lord became a mystery to western civilization. Some people tried to assign a political or social motive to our Lord's crucifixion, but most people simply ignored it. It seemed weak. It seemed foolish. And no one could fathom why anyone would put a portrait of the crucifixion in church or anywhere else.

But once evolution got rid of God the creator of heaven and earth western civilization found itself without comfort in the face of real life. Real life still had things in it like death and all of those things that lead to death. It had disasters in it. It had all host of terrible diseases that took people's lives. People wanted God back. They brought Him back, but it was not God that they brought back, but a figment. The God that they invented for themselves was a god of comfort. It was a god that never punished them. It is a god that never threatens them. It is a god without hell or wrath. It is a god that always has something comforting to say, but never anything threatening to say. It is a god who is not responsible for the fire that burned down your house. It is a god who is not responsible for the drought that ruined your crops. It is a god who is not responsible for the down turn in the markets that ruined your investment. It is a god who never condemns anyone because of sin. It is a god that talks about the mistakes that people make and how they should deal with their mistakes. It is a god who uses his knowledge of right and wrong not

to condemn or rebuke, but to help people lead better lives. Such living can usually be achieved through seven easy steps toward a better and more fulfilling life. This is the god of therapeutic moral deism. This god claims to be the god of the Christians, but it is not.

This god produces songs that call themselves Christian songs, but they are not because they do not sing about the Christ and if they should happen to sing about the Christ, they do not sing about His cross. If they ever did sing about the cross, they would then have to sing about sin and death and therapeutic moral deism does not believe in sin and it has evolutionary explanations of death. It is why some people claim to be Christian and still believe in evolution. It is why some people claim to believe in God and believe in evolution. Such people believe in the therapeutic moral deist god because that is the only god that evolution can tolerate. It cannot tolerate the real one because if it did, it would have to talk about sin and death. But if ever it did talk about sin and death, then it would sing of the Christ and His cross.

Therapeutic moral deism is everywhere. There are even preachers of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod who preach it. Make sure that your preacher is not preaching it.

Therapeutic moral deism rejects the cross of Christ because it looks foolish. Therapeutic moral deism rejects the crucifixion of the Christ because it looks weak. Therapeutic moral deism does not have the nerve to reject Him openly because therapeutic moral deism wants to continue to claim to be Christian so what therapeutic moral deism does is simply ignore the cross hoping that one day people will quit talking about it.

But God is independent and He will show up where He wants to show up.

Therapeutic moral deism says that God is almighty, but it does not want to deal with the logical consequences of the God who is almighty. Therapeutic moral deism comforts you with the false Gospel that the fire and the tornado, the drought and the down turn in the economy were not sent by God, but are the result of forces in the universe with which God does not interfere.

But in the end therapeutic moral deism leaves you with no comfort at all. For if God were not in the first tornado that hit you, why should God be in the next tornado that threatens you? If God is not in the next tornado that threatens you, why should you pray to Him for rescue from the tornado since His is not responsible for any of it? In the end if God is not responsible for the curse of death, why look to Him when you are dying?

And so people quit praying even though they say that they do because they are afraid to admit that their religious system is not working. And so people quit going to church even though when religious surveyists ask them if they are going to church, they lie and say that they are for fear of admitting that their so called religion doesn't address the real world at all.

The crucifixion of Jesus is folly to those who are perishing.

But to those who are being saved the crucifixion of Christ is the wisdom of God.

The reason is that the cross of Christ deals with the world the way that it really is. This makes sense since the God of the cross is the God who made the world and cursed it with death. The cross of Christ comforts our conscience and puts it at rest in a way that therapeutic moral deism never could. This makes sense because the God of the cross is the God who made the conscience.

In other words it does not provide lasting comfort to any man's conscience to call sins mistakes. Our conscience cannot be fooled like that. Our conscience knows the full extent of the harm that our sins cause others and how deeply it fractures our faith in God. Our conscience can try to lie to itself and tell itself that things are not so bad by calling sins mistakes, but it is not fooled. Therapeutic moral deism will

offer up some kind of step program for dealing with the mistakes that we make, but it will never call them sin and as long as it will never call it sin, the sin remains unconfessed and the practitioner of therapeutic moral deism is damned having trusted in his own righteousness rather than to believe in the righteous judgment of God.

The cross of Christ deals with sin by forgiving it. It deals with life the way that it really is. It allows the conscience to confess what it has really done, how deeply it has really fallen, and by doing so provides it with the comfort of knowing that in spite of how things really are, its sins are forgiven.

The cross of Christ does not sugarcoat things or try to make things seem better than they are in terms of comfort. That kind of comfort will fool no one. The cross of Christ deals with sin in all of its faithless ugliness, because on that cross the God of glory died. It would take the death of the God of glory to atone for sins as bad as ours.

And so the cross of Christ is wisdom. The cross of Christ is power. It is wisdom and power because it deals with life the way that it really is and deals with death the way that it really is.

Death is the end of life. It is the end of anything good. It is the ultimate dysfunction. It is the end of God's creation. It is His curse on human sin.

Not only does God undergo death Himself on the cross, but He also provides for the means of overcoming death. If the wages of sin is death then the forgiveness won by Christ upon the cross for you overcame death. You will rise as He is risen.

This is the independence of God. To a bunch of self righteous self justifying human beings the cross of Christ looks foolish and weak. To sinners doomed to death and hell the cross of Christ is their salvation. It is the wisdom of God. It is the power of God. It is God dealing with reality the way that reality really is rather than to pretend that reality is something other than what it really is.

The sacraments are no different.

Infant baptism looks foolish to the eyes of human wisdom. It looks weak to the eyes of human wisdom. That is because human wisdom is constantly under the desire to justify itself. It wants to believe that in some measure it is good and that it can use that goodness to justify itself in the eyes of its own god. Such people deny infant baptism. They say that the infant must make his choice. They say that baptism is an outward sign of an inward change even though the Bible never once says that and one must wonder why people would say something that the Bible does not say. It is because they have abandoned the Bible as God's word and subscribed to the false metanarrative of evolution leading to therapeutic moral deism and the false god who says that you are not so bad just try a little harder and you will be good.

Infant baptism confesses before the world as loudly as it can that there is no difference between an adult and an infant in the eyes of God. My seminary training makes no difference. In the eyes of God I am no wiser and no more powerful than an infant. To think that somehow I can do something that an infant cannot do in order to please almighty God is to put my faith in the wisdom and strength of men and not in the wisdom and strength of God.

And as usual God is independent. If He wants to put His salvation in baptism He may do so. Who is to stop Him? God says, "Baptism now saves you," and so baptism now saves you because He said, unless you in your wisdom wish to deny the word of God.

He puts His salvation where it pleases Him. And man's incessant quarreling with God over putting salvation in baptism simply proves that man trusts in his own wisdom and righteousness rather than the crucified God who frankly does not care how weak or foolish He appears, but wishes to save in the manner in which He wishes to save.

Holy Communion is no different. Men have disputed through the ages whether or not it is the body and blood of Christ. They have found explanations for what God has said about it that depart from what God has said about it. Man's wisdom has called it a symbol because man's wisdom cannot deal with an almighty God that can put His body and blood wherever He wants it to be. Therapeutic moral deism cannot fathom a God that would need to forgive much less one who would forgive in such a humble and lowly fashion. Therapeutic moral deism is too busy in our day and age waving its hands around trying to be righteous rather than opening its mouth at the altar and receiving the righteousness of the crucified.

The almighty God has nothing to prove. He will put His salvation where He wants to put His salvation. Let the whole world and all the host of hell rage against it and He does not mind. He used to live in a tent you know while the gods of the pagans lived in palaces. He does not mind bread and wine for His own body and blood. He does not mind the lowly and the humble. The real God is the crucified God. There is no other God.

And so God is independent. He is humble. He baptizes infants. He gives His body and blood and forgiveness away in bread and wine. He is crucified. And these things are humble and lowly precisely so that we may have access to them.

After all the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. If He came to us in His wisdom and power, who could deal with Him? Are you wiser than God? Are you stronger than Him?

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.