

A Look at Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Forever Young Group

Christ Our Savior
Lutheran Church

November 8, 2023



YOUR PRESENTERS:

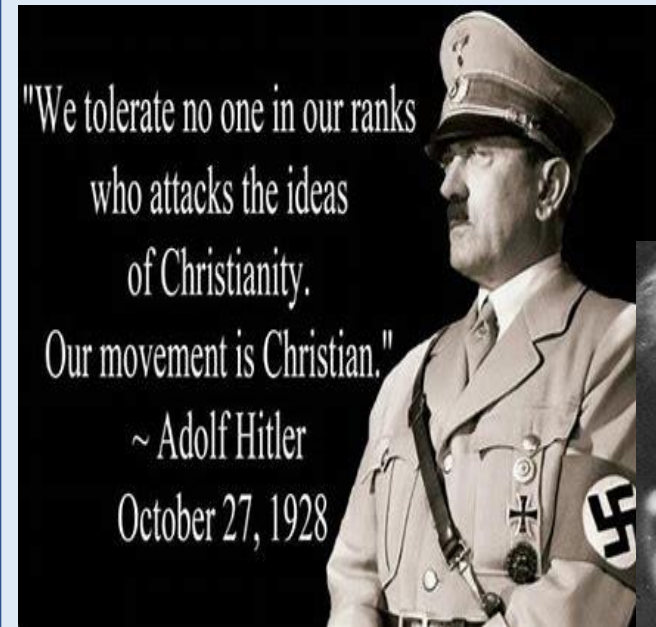


Pastor Nick
"Bonhoeffer Biography"

Pastor Tyler
"Doing Life Together"

Pastor Jim
"What is the Cost of Discipleship?"

WHO IS DIETRICH BONHOEFFER?



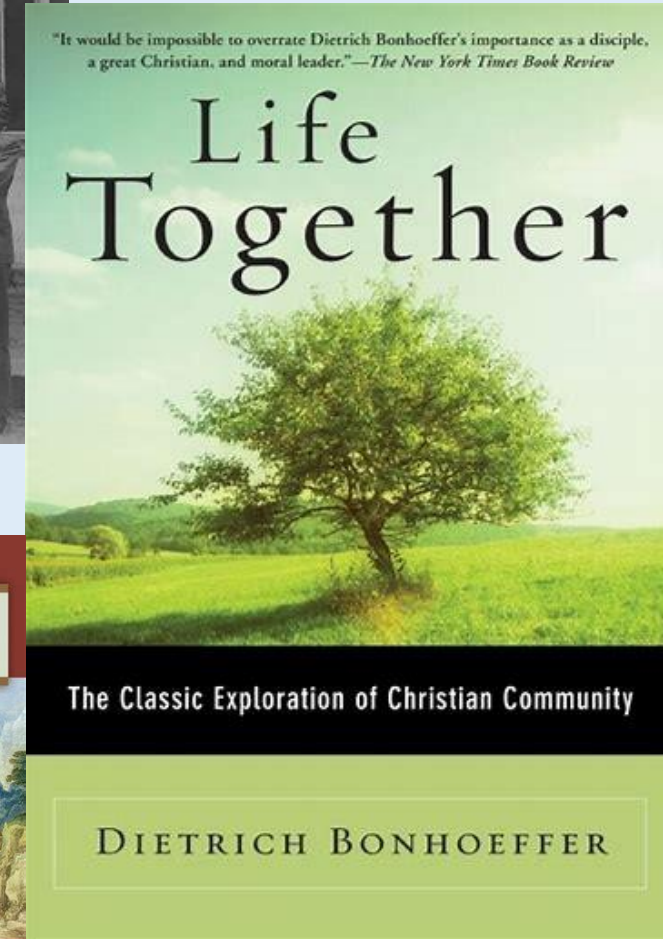
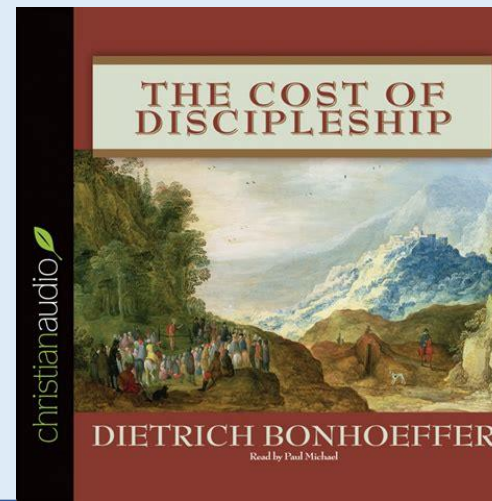
A THREAT



A HERO



A CONFESSING SEMINARY



A MANIFESTO and A MANUEL

Born into Privilege

- ◆ Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born on February 4, 1906
- ◆ Father: Karl Bonhoeffer – psychiatrist and neurologist
- ◆ Mother: Paula Bonhoeffer – teacher and granddaughter of theologian Karl von Hase, and Prussian nobleman Stanislaus von Kalckreuth
- ◆ Dietrich was one of eight children
- ◆ Dietrich received a high level of education because of his family

Dietrich's Education

- ◇ At age 14, he decided to pursue theological education.
- ◇ University of Tübingen
- ◇ University of Berlin
- ◇ At age 21, completed Doctor of Theology degree at the University of Berlin
- ◇ Graduated with *summa cum laude*
- ◇ He was a rising star in the academic world.
- ◇ He was surrounded by Dead Orthodoxy Lutheranism.
 - ◇ Having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. – 2 Timothy 3:5
- ◇ Bonhoeffer was battling both Dead Orthodoxy and Neo-Orthodoxy (Barth)

Dietrich's time in New York

- ◆ He moved to New York in 1930.
- ◆ He went to Union Theological Seminary in New York City and was unimpressed with their theology.
- ◆ Met Frank Fisher, a black fellow seminarian (“field trip” to deep south)
- ◆ Fisher introduced him to Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem
- ◆ Dietrich saw the close-knit Christian community of oppressed minority Christians. (They lived as Christians! Different than academic Christians)
- ◆ This changed Dietrich's life.

After New York

- ◆ In 1931, he became a lecturer of systematic theology at the University of Berlin.
- ◆ Dietrich was ordained on November 15, 1931, at 25 years old.
- ◆ His career dramatically changed once the Nazis took power in 1933 and Hitler was *elected*.

Voice of the Resistance

- ◆ Hitler was installed as Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933.
- ◆ Two days later, Dietrich attacked Hitler and warned Germany in a radio broadcast.
 - ◆ Hitler was a “false” messiah, or false leader
- ◆ The broadcast was cut off as he was speaking.

The Confessing Church

- ◆ In July of 1933, Hitler began taking control of German churches.
 - ◆ State-run churches
- ◆ In September of 1933, pastors, church officials, and parishioners of Jewish descent were removed from their positions (Aryan Paragraph).
- ◆ In 1934, the Confessing Church was founded.
- ◆ Jesus is the head of the Church, not Hitler.
- ◆ Only about 20% of German pastors “supported” the Confessing Church.

Resistance

- ◇ In 1935, Bonhoeffer started the underground Finkenwalde Seminary.
- ◇ Taught and preached passive resistance.
- ◇ Gestapo closed it in September of 1937.
- ◇ Bonhoeffer was banned from Berlin in 1938.
- ◇ Went back to New York in 1939. Returned to Germany two weeks later.
- ◇ Banned from public speaking, teaching, and preaching in 1940. He was CANCELED.
- ◇ Joined the Abwehr (German Military Intelligence) in 1940.
- ◇ Served as a courier to reveal resistance movements to the Western Allies.
- ◇ Could there be peace if Hitler was taken out?

Dietrich Arrested

- ◆ He was arrested on April 5, 1943. Conspired to rescue Jews using his position and was trying to help other pastors of the Confessing Church evade military service.
- ◆ Imprisoned at Tegel Prison for a year and a half while awaiting trial.
- ◆ His high status helped him.
- ◆ Wrote many letters and papers.
- ◆ Ministered to fellow prisoners and guards.
- ◆ Engaged to Maria von Wedemeyer while in prison.

Dietrich's Execution

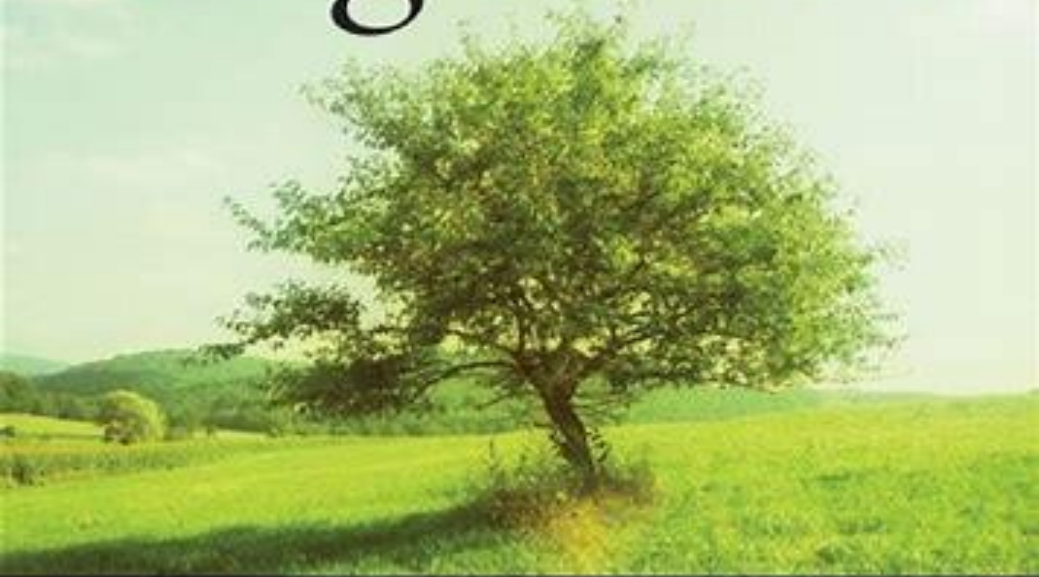
- ◆ On April 4, 1945, the intentions of the Abwehr were discovered.
- ◆ Abwehr members were ordered to be executed.
- ◆ Bonhoeffer sentenced to death on April 8, 1945.
- ◆ Executed on April 9, 1945, at the Flossenburg concentration camp.
- ◆ He was stripped naked and hanged by a piano wire.
- ◆ Final words, "This is the end – but for me it is the beginning of life."
- ◆ Flossenburg was liberated by the United States on April 23, 1945.

“I saw Pastor Bonhoeffer... kneeling on the floor praying fervently to God. I was most deeply moved by the way this lovable man prayed, so devout and so certain that God heard his prayer. At the place of execution, he again said a short prayer and then climbed the few steps to the gallows, brave and composed. His death ensued after a few seconds. In the almost fifty years that I worked as a doctor, I have hardly ever seen a man die so entirely submissive to the will of God.”

- Eberhard Bethge

"It would be impossible to overrate Dietrich Bonhoeffer's importance as a disciple,
a great Christian, and moral leader."—*The New York Times Book Review*

Life Together



The Classic Exploration of Christian Community

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Introduction

I. COMMUNITY

II. The Day with Others

III. The Day Alone

IV. Ministry

V. Confession and Communion

Christian Community

Psalms 133:1
KJV

Behold,



*how good and how pleasant it is
for brethren to dwell together in unity!*

COMMUNITY

We must not take for granted that we have the privilege of community.

Jesus lived in the midst of his enemies.

At the end his disciples deserted him.

On the cross he was utterly alone surrounded by evildoers and mockers.

In the end even the Father forsakes him.



**“MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY
HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?”**

Christian Community

“The Kingdom is to be in the midst of your enemies. And he who will not suffer this does not want to be among friends, to sit among roses and lilies, not with the bad people, but the devout people. O you blasphemers and betrayers of Christ! If Christ had done what you are doing who would ever have been spared?”

- Martin Luther

Consider this...

Agree or disagree:

“The physical presence of the other Christians is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer?”

COMMUNITY

Christianity means community
THROUGH Jesus and **IN** Jesus

We belong to one another only
through and in Jesus Christ.

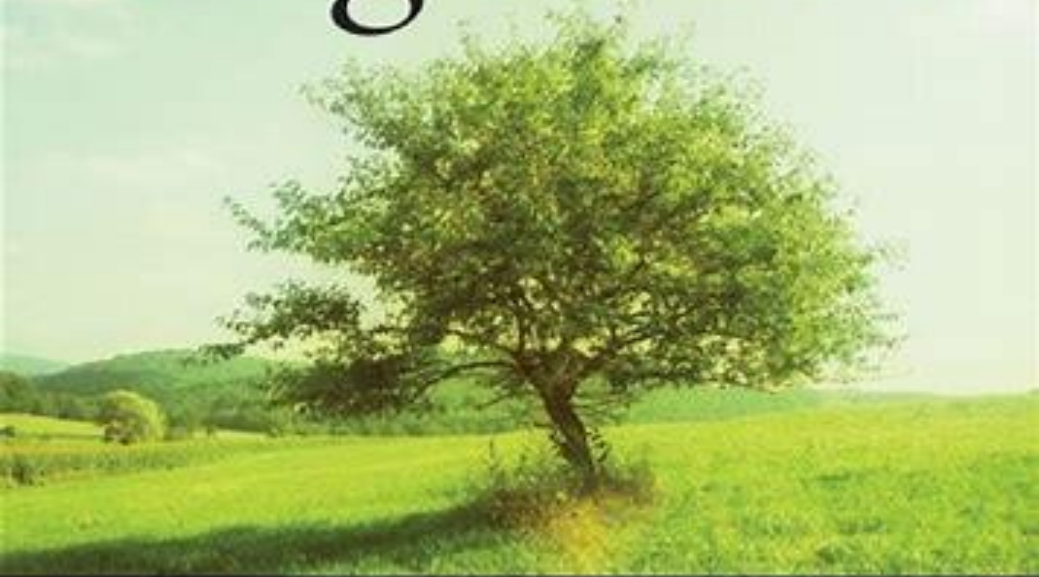
What does this mean?

1. A Christian needs others
because of Jesus
2. A Christian comes to others
only through Jesus
3. In Jesus we have been chosen



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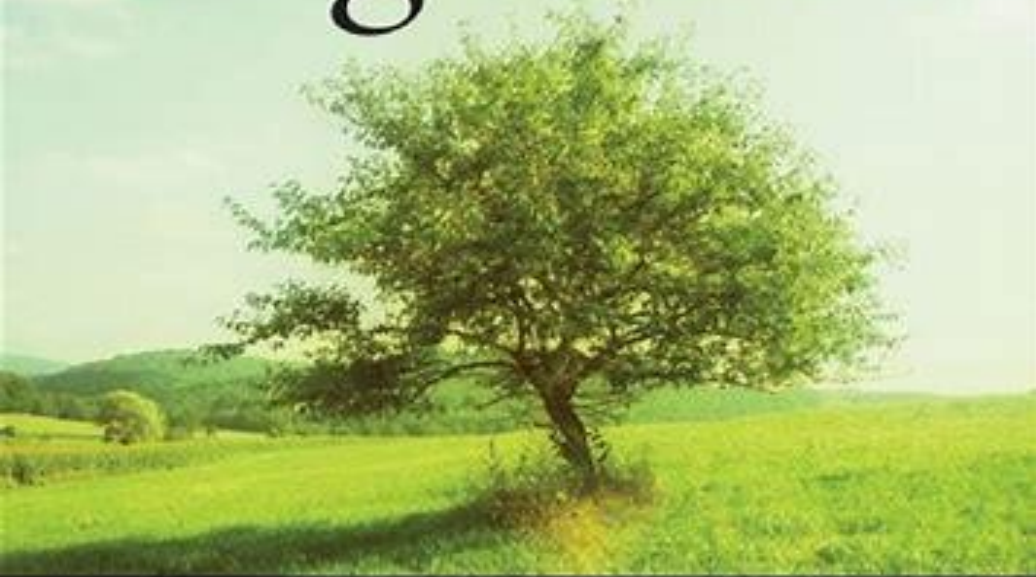
The Day With Others

- ◆ The day's beginning
- ◆ The secret of the Psalter
- ◆ Reading the Scriptures
- ◆ Singing the New Song
- ◆ Saying Prayers together
- ◆ Fellowship of the Table
- ◆ The Day's work
- ◆ Noonday and Evening



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The Day Alone

- ◆ Many people seek fellowship because they are afraid to be alone. Because they cannot stand loneliness, they are driven to seek the company of other people.
- ◆ Satan seeks to isolate. The man who is alone with his sin, is completely and utterly alone.
- ◆ The Christian community is NOT a spiritual sanatorium.
- ◆ The person who comes into a fellowship because he is running away from himself is misusing it for the sake of diversion.

The Day Alone – Solitude and Silence

- ◆ Let him who cannot be alone beware of community
 - ◆ The challenge of death comes to us all, and no one can die for another. Everyone must fight his own battle with death by himself, alone...I will not be with you then, nor you with me. – Luther
- ◆ Let him who is not in community beware of being alone.
 - ◆ “If I die, then I am not alone in death; if I suffer they suffer with me.” – Luther



The Day Alone – Meditation



- ◆ The period of personal meditation is to be devoted to the Scriptures, private prayer, and intercession, & it has no other purpose. (p. 81)
- ◆ It lets us be alone with the Word
- ◆ This is the very reason why we begin our meditation with the prayer that God may send his Holy Spirit through his Word and reveal his Word to us & enlighten us. (p. 83)
- ◆ What if the Word doesn't reveal new ideas?
- ◆ “Seek God, not happiness” (p. 84)

The Day Alone – Prayer and Intercession

- ◆ The Scripture meditation leads to prayer.
- ◆ Prayer means nothing else but the readiness and willingness to receive and appropriate the Word, and to accept it in one's personal situation, particular tasks, decisions, sins, and temptations.
- ◆ Intercession means no more than to bring our brother into the presence of God, to see him under the Cross of Jesus as a poor human being and sinner in need of grace.



The Day Alone – The Test of Meditation

- ◆ Every day brings to the Christian many hours in which he will be alone in an unchristian environment. These are the times of TESTING. (p. 88)
- ◆ The individual must realize that his hours of aloneness react upon the community.
- ◆ One who returns to the Christian family fellowship after fighting the battle of the day brings with him the blessing of his aloneness, but he himself receives anew the blessing of the fellowship (p. 89)

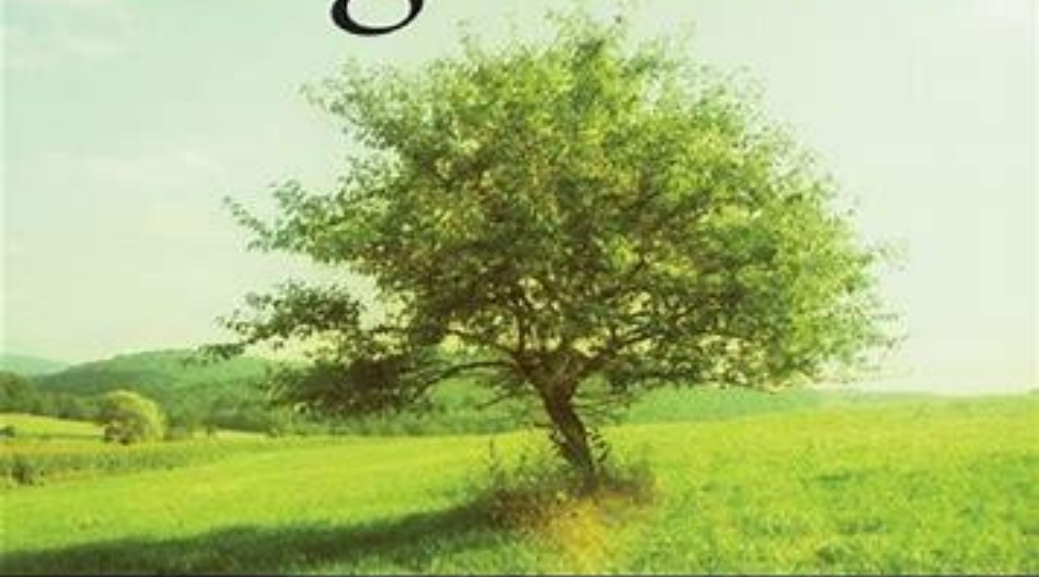


Consider this...

How are we to “be” Christian in a world that
is radically unchristian?

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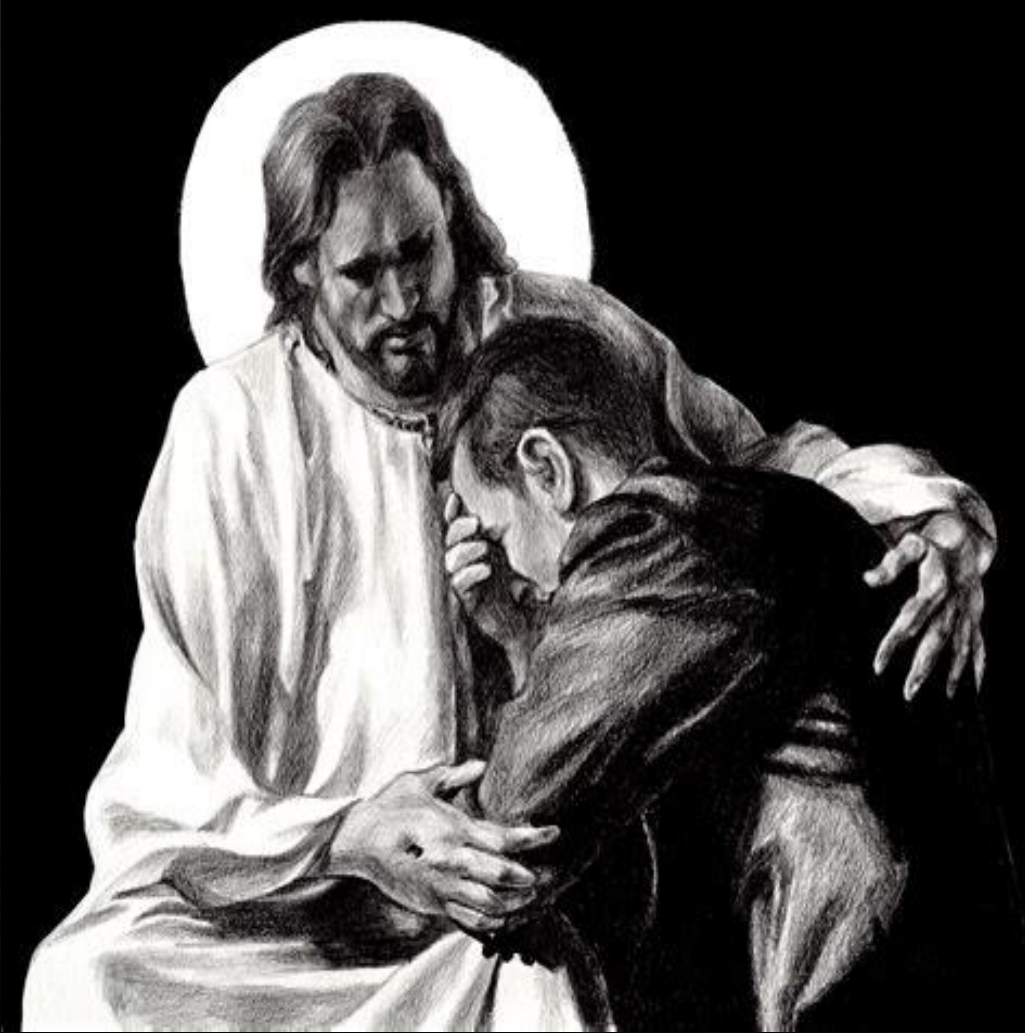
COMMUNION

Ministry – Combatting the Enemy

- ◆ “There arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be the greatest.” – Luke 9:46
- ◆ Hence it is vitally necessary that every Christian community from the very outset face this dangerous enemy squarely, and eradicate it.
- ◆ Ministry of:
 - Holding One’s Tongue
 - Meekness
 - Listening
 - Helpfulness
 - Bearing
 - Proclaiming
 - Authority



Confession and Communion– We are sinners



- ◆ The Gospel confronts us with the truth: You are a sinner, a great, desperate sinner; now come as the sinner that you are, to God who loves you. He wants you as you are.
- ◆ In the Christian community when the call to brotherly (sisterly) confession and forgiveness goes forth, it is a call to the great grace of God in the Church.
- ◆ Breaking through:
 - To Community • To New Life
 - To the Cross • To Certainty
- ◆ The Joy of the Sacrament



The COST of
Discipleship

“Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace.”

“Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner.”

“Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

Cheap grace is

- The grace we bestow on ourselves.
- The preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance
- Baptism without church discipline
- Communion without confession.

“Grace alone does everything, they say, and so everything can remain as it was before. “All for sin could not atone.” The world goes on in the same old way, and we are still sinners “even in the best life” as Luther said.

Well, then let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world’s standards in every sphere of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin. That is what we mean by cheap grace, the grace which amounts to the **justification of sin without the justification of the repentant sinner**, who departs from sin and from whom sin departs.”

THE CHALLENGE OF COSTLY GRACE

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye, which causes him to stumble, **it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows Him.**

THE CHALLENGE OF COSTLY GRACE

“Costly grace is the Gospel, which must be sought again and again, the gift, which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock.”

- Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ.
- It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life.
- It is costly because it condemns sin and grace because it justifies the sinner.

THE CHALLENGE OF COSTLY GRACE

- Above all, it is costly because it costs God the life of His Son:
“ye were bought at a price.”
 - Christ has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. – Luther SC, Second Article
- And what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us.

THE CHALLENGE OF COSTLY GRACE

“Costly grace is the Incarnation of God”

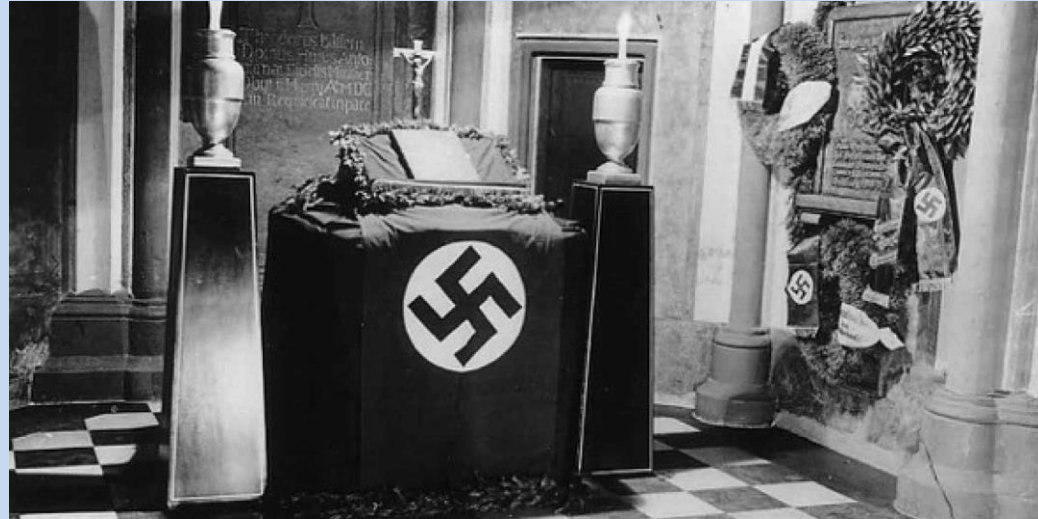


WHY DOES BONHOEFFER STILL MATTER?

His writings are important lessons for faith during difficult times:

- One is that, despite the importance of gathering to worship, the “church” is present even when people cannot be together.
- Second, Bonhoeffer teaches us that it is possible to keep our moral and theological bearings amid interruptions, prohibitions and even confinement.
- Third, Bonhoeffer teaches us the importance of spiritual disciplines that can withstand changing circumstances.

WE, TOO, STRUGGLE FOR THE SOUL OF THE CHURCH



IF THERE IS TIME

There was a struggle two factions in the Protestant churches, the German Christian Movement and the Confessing Church.

- The German Christian Movement (or “German Christians”) worked to align itself with the new Nazi regime ideologically .
- The Confessing Church, in which Dietrich Bonhoeffer was active, resisted this alignment.

Within the Confessing Church a conflict over how strenuously, broadly and publicly it should oppose Hitler.

Bonhoeffer sided with the radicals, who pushed the Confessing Church toward relatively extreme forms of opposition.

“Must the Christian go around looking for a cross to bear, seeking to suffer? No, insisted Bonhoeffer. Opportunities for bearing crosses will occur along life’s way and that is required is the willingness to act when the time comes. The needs of the neighbor, especially those of the weak and downtrodden, the victimized and the persecuted, the ill and the lonely, will become abundantly evident.

The heretical German Christians, in 1933, galvanized Dietrich Bonhoeffer and another German pastor, Martin Niemoller, into action. They produced a statement that spelled out their grievances with the German Christians.

The statement contained the following four points:

- First, it declared that its signers would rededicate themselves to the Scriptures and to the previous doctrinal confessions of the church.
- Second, they would work to protect the church's fidelity to Scripture and to the confessions.
- Third, they would lend financial aid to those being persecuted by the new laws or by any kind of violence.
- And fourth, they would firmly reject the Aryan Paragraph.

The Aryan Paragraph was legislation that “would prevent pastors of Jewish background who had already been ordained from serving as ministers.” In other words, **nobody who was ethnically Jewish, but who had become a Christian, could serve in the church.**

This statement was circulated to all the pastors in the German church, and by the end of 1933, six thousand pastors had signed it. The pastors who signed the statement became an organization known as the Pastors' Emergency League. This was a major first step toward what would soon come to be known as the Confessing Church.

Closing questions, comments, concerns?