

CROWDS

- I. Luke 7:18-35
 - A. Last week Jesus shows the crowd.
 - B. This week Jesus speaks to the crowd
- II. What are the crowds supposed to hear? How are they to interpret what they hear?
 - A. What Jesus says to the crowd is broken into 3 parts :
 1. Part 1...
 - a) Who did you go out to see
 2. Part 2.....
 - a) The greatness of John the Baptist
 3. Part 3....
 - a) Who is this generation?
 - (1) "we played the flute for you and you did not dance. We sang a dirge and you did not weep."
 4. Then Jesus summarizes
 - B. All the statements Jesus makes separate out, sifts out the individual from the crowd
 1. If you're part of the crowd, you're going out to see a spectacle "*look at this crazy guy spouting this stuff!*"
 - a) Who did you come out to see?
 2. if you're part of the crowd, you want people to DO things for you and when they do those things for you, you hate them for it.
 - a) Dance for us/Why don't you dance for us
 - b) Weep/ Why don't you weep?
 - C. Jesus tells the crowds respective reactions to John the Baptist and Jesus.
 1. One comes to you and you complain he doesn't eat and drink what you do
 2. Another comes to you and you complain he is a glutton and a drunkard
 - a) You do not know what you want because you are thinking like a crowd

CROWDS AND UNTRUTH AND THE INDIVIDUAL

- III. Just like last week, the crowd was faced with "*you healed that guy and this widow's son*"
 - A. Jesus is only focused on compassion.
 1. But Crowds are NOT compassionate.
 - a) A PERSON IS compassionate.
 2. Here, a crowd cannot interpret.
 - a) A crowd tells you what to think.
 - (1) But a PERSON interprets.
 - (2) A PERSON gains wisdom.
 - (a) The book of Proverbs (the book of wisdom) is addressed TO A PERSON.

(b) Solomon is given wisdom; not all of Israel

IV. This a radical thought- The primacy of the individual

A. We are made in God's image, not as a crowd, but as individuals

1. Soren Kierkegaard's essay "The Crowd Is Untruth. " Because it deals with the madness of crowds.
2. (Charles MacKay... Extraordinary popular delusions and the madness of crowds)

THE PRIMACY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

V. Jesus is calling ME and YOU as individuals to become a truly free fully aware individual.

A. There is NO CROWD in the Christian faith.

1. There are only individuals who believe in Jesus Christ is Lord.

a) Luke 12:6-7

2. Who come together to worship

a) Our time together is never at the expense of the individual, but in support of the individual

b) Evelyn Underhill

(1) The "praying church" is built of praying souls; and all that has been said of the fundamentally social character of Christian worship, as expressed in the common liturgic action of the church, and of the status of the individual soul as an organic part of this corporate life, must not be allowed to obscure this complementary truth.

(2) Christianity proclaims, more clearly than any other religion, the value and particular vocation of the individual, his unique and direct relation to God. Its greatest triumphs have been the individual achievements of the saints: that is, persons whose lives of worship have made them tools of God.

(a) <https://thevalueofsparrows.com/2012/11/26/evelyn-underhill-christianity-proclaims-the-value-of-the-individual/>

3. John Chrysostom

a) The Holy City, wherein all are free and all are equal

b) To JC, the Holy City could only be made up of free individuals who choose to associate with other free individuals

(1) There is no overarching government, no hierarchy, NO CROWD

B. Each person is being called by God to be THE PERSON God wants them to be.

1. Not a person who's been told what to do.

2. Not a person who's part of a crowd.

a) I notice crowd-think most when a person speaks publicly and the crowd applauds what the person says because they agree with it. What bothers me is that this behavior self reinforces the "thought bubble".

- b) This disturbs me because the crowd pleasing group think minimizes the value of the individual.
- C. There are world leaders who depend completely on their formation by the crowd.
 - 1. They can become truly terrifying
 - 2. Especially to a democracy, WHICH REQUIRES INDIVIDUAL CRITICAL THOUGHT
 - 3. In conflicted times, God calls on us to draw on our experience AS INDIVIDUALS,
 - a) our own wisdom and rigorous attention to how we are thinking and acting in a way that
 - (1) **Encourages** one another,
 - (2) **Resists** oppression and tyranny,
 - (3) **comforts** those who are afflicted by oppression and hate
 - (4) and **afflicts** those who promote oppression and the will of the crowd
 - b) because Jesus calls us to be fully individual as people of God.

APPLICATION

- VI. How to become more of an individual while following Christ
 - A. From Benedict XVI commentary on John Chrysostom
(<http://www.ewtn.com/library/papaldoc/b16ChrstChrch50.htm>)
 - 1. Climb the ladder of God (Jacob/Jesus)
 - a) God gives us Creation and makes himself visible through it
 - (1) Paul in Romans
 - b) God gives us Scripture to help us - “God as indulgent to our weakness”
 - (1) Timothy
 - c) God gives us Jesus Christ “God-with-us”
 - (1) God gives us the Holy Spirit as guide
 - (a) John - ‘the advocate’
 - 2. Resist the ways of the crowd, no matter which side or direction it presses in from
 - B. We are in some deep mysteries here
 - 1. Individual freedom in association with people and groups
 - 2. Crowds and their influence
 - 3. Free will and following teachers
 - 4. Teachers and Messiahs and their influence
 - C. I would remind you of the Story of Exodus
 - 1. These same issues get played out even as freedom from slavery is sought by God for God’s people
 - 2. So many of the conflicts in the desert, in Jesus’ dealings with the people and the disciples, in the history of the church, in the history of this church can

be explained by the conflict between the desires of the crowd and the primacy of the individual

- a) Freedom can only be true when all have been freed from slavery and oppression
 - b) But we can only know true freedom as individuals
 - (1) Beware the crowd and the thinking of crowds
3. For freedom, Christ has made us free (galatians 5:1)