

Get a Rhythm: Communion, Culture, and Co-Mission (pt. 2)
1 Corinthians 10:14–22 | 10.23.2016 | Body Life @OBC

This week marks the start of the World Series . . . a contest between Indians and somebody.

Today also marks the follow up to a message from last week on idolatry, and . . . what constitutes for us today forms of idolatry that we may or may not be aware.

And so it may not be surprising that one form of idolatry we will consider is the idolatry that takes place on ballfields and in stadiums all across the country.

There is, in our country, a great obsession with sports that often turns idolatrous, but what may be more surprising is the way idols have helped two the Cleveland Indians.

Apparently, Mike Napoli and Jason Kipnis have set a shrine between their lockers offering rum and cigars to Jobu . . . a pretend god who helps baseball hitters hit curveballs.

This shrine is a take-off on the movie *Major League* where one of the players on the cinematic Cleveland Indians practiced voodoo to improve his hitting.

In [June](#) of this year the two Indians set up the shrine . . . in [July](#) they held a mock sacrifice to help another player . . . and as they go into the WS . . . it remains . . .

What should we make of this ??

Is it harmless fun, like dressing up as a ghost for Halloween?

Or is it something more occult which we protest?

If these ball players are just copying a movie and don't really believe in voodoo, are they still committing idolatry? Is idolatry only committed if we intend to be idolaters?

Or, might we do the same thing unawares?

Indeed, even if the Indians aren't really practicing voodoo . . .

. . . Could it be that their shrine exposes another kind of idolatry . . .

. . . A over-commitment to entertainment . . . and movie imitation?

It's a personal question for me . . . b/c I could quote dozens of lines from *Major League* . . . a movie I watched more than a dozen times as a teen.

I grieve over how much movies shaped my heart and life before Christ.

And just the same today . . . I feel the pull of the world and I want to know how do we fight?

How do maintain allegiance to Christ and proclaim his glories in a culture full of idols?

These are questions we need to ask . . . and 1 Cor 10 gives us an answer.

To refresh our memories, let's revisit Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 10:14–22 . . .

To recap . . . 1 Corinthians 10 emphasizes the many dangers of idolatry.

vv. 1–13 recall 10 episodes where Israel's idolatry provoked the Lord to anger.

Paul brings them up to say: Those who tasted the salvation of God must continue to walk in holiness . . . and not presume upon the Lord's mercies if you chase idols.

So . . . Because God has given you all you need to escape idolatry by means of communion with Christ (v. 13), flee idolatry.

Then **vv. 14 – 22** continues the argument, pointing to three different tables.

And remember: sitting down to table with others establishes or continues a covenant.

This is true for the **Lord's Table** . . .

This was true in **Israel** . . . when the people of God participated in the altar.

This was also true in **Corinth** . . . as food sacrificed to idols enabled men and women to identify themselves with these idols.

Around these demon tables . . . communion was had . . .

And so while the culminating point Paul will make in **verses 23–33** is that Christians in Corinth were FREE to eat meat *UNLESS it was sacrificed to idols*. . .

Here he stresses the need to see the idolatry around them . . . and to flee from it!

We must do the same . . . And ask . . .

Where are the tables of demons today? Do I see them? Am I fleeing them?

How do I walk thru a world full of temples w/o sitting down to table?

These are questions that any Christian must ask . . . and all the more as our surrounding culture becomes increasingly secular and pagan.

So . . . to see how we might keep rhythm with Christ in an idolatrous world,

. . . let me suggest 4 premises that outfit you and I to walk wisely in culture.

Premise #1: Communion Creates a Culture

This premise might be plain enough, but let me define my terms and then relate them.

What is communion?

In our passage communion is the word “participation” or *koinonia*. And it is the rich and thick relationships that are enjoyed by the people who live in covenant together.

In church life, communion is often synonymous with the Lord’s Supper. And for good reason, it is the covenantal union we enjoy with Christ and one another.

Remember, in a covenant, the covenant itself is the stipulations between the parties. But communion is the goal of the covenant. It is the sweet fruit of love and loyalty that stands at the center of the relationship. The stipulations guard this communion and lead its members to enjoy greater conversation, commitment, service, and communion

Communion is created in the context of a covenant and when communion is consistent and healthy it creates a culture.

But what is a culture?

I partly depends on who you ask

Whereas culture used to imply something like “high culture,” . . .

Today it’s a more general word which describes the beliefs and values, habits and practices of community, or in particular the secular world which is alienated from God.

IOW, culture is often defined as the “world which is hostile towards God.” And indeed, this is often how we speak of culture.

And yet . . . more basically . . . cultures . . . like what you might find in a biology lab. . . are living entities created by a people share life, values, habits in common . . .

IOW, what they commit themselves to and commune around . . . creates a culture!

So . . . in our passage, we can say there are 3 cultures that are being created

At the **Lord’s Table** . . . a people who commune with Christ are being conformed into his image . . . and a culture is emerging

In the **OT**, we have powerful example of how God’s covenant law shaped the people of Israel and created a culture.

And last . . . Paul warns of eating at the **demon’s table** because he knows such participation will shape the affections and attachments of the Christians.

In other words, THIS is how a Christian is assimilated into culture . . . by participating in the demonic practices of the world.

In response . . . we need premise #2 . . .

Premise #2: A Gospel Culture Reinforces Communion with Christ

When Jesus left his disciples with the Lord's Supper, he did so. . . SO we would not FORGET

The Lord's Supper reminds us . . . of Christ's death in our place. . . of who we are in Christ . . . of his broken body for our sin. . . of his shed blood for our forgiveness. . . of our future hope with him.

Indeed, the Lord's Supper is the gospel baked, poured, ingested and imbibed . . . so that we would not forget Christ was broken and pierced for us.

At the same time . . . the communion creates a culture that ALSO reminds us of who we are . . . It REINFORCES the communion we have with Christ.

In this way . . . the culture of a church reinforces what is given directly by Christ.

The more a church sticks to the Word . . . the more it reinforces gospel culture.

The more it deviates from DOING the word... the weaker its reinforcement

That's one aspect of CULTURE REINFORCING COMMUNION

The other is that . . . the church does not CREATE what Christ has given to us.

The gospel creates the church. The word & Spirit create life. Lord's Supper doesn't !!

Lord's Supper & Baptism point to the real thing, but it is X who is the resurrection & life

This point is vital for us to remember . . .

Otherwise we'll put all our weight in doing the right acts and creating the right culture.

This gets it backwards. Gospel Culture reinforces our communion with Christ.

Now that being said . . .

Culture can and often does powerfully impact a person who is spiritually dead.
This is the a-symmetrical reality of culture and identity-formation . . .

A Christian culture can never create spiritual life . . . it can only strengthen the living.
BUT A non-Christian culture (or Xian) can influence a person . . . give them an identity.

HOW? Apart from Christ . . . our hearts are like magnetic felt sweaters . . . they pick up every piece of lint and filth and trash they come in contact with.

And the worse the surrounding culture . . . the worse habits dead hearts pick up.

Culture can't overcome the gospel, but it can shape in powerful ways spiritual dead.

(But at the same time)

/: Gospel Culture will reinforce communion w/ Christ . . . godless culture resists

Premise #3: Godless Culture Resists Communion with Christ

This is the conflict that stands between the two tables in Corinth.

Will the Corinthians commune with Christ alone at the Lord's Table?
OR Will they sit down at another table and participate in the cultural practices of Corinth?

They can't do both . . . these tables are mutually exclusive . . . and so they show the kind of spiritual warfare that exists in our world:

Like Moses after the Golden Calf . . . Paul is drawing the line in the sand and saying:

You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.
You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

You must decide which side you are on . . . BUT such a decision isn't like choosing between chocolate & vanilla. It's more like a diabetic choosing to stop eating all sugar.

They know they should do it . . . it's the right thing to do . . . it's the healthy thing . . .
. . . but their tastebuds, their bloodstream, their habits, and their home fight them.

**This is the same when we seek to follow X . . . there's an enemy who fights against us
. . . How do we resist the resistance??**

The testimony of Scripture speaks of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Internally . . . our own flesh pulls us towards sin. As James 1:14 says, "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire."

When Jesus was tempted . . . he was only tempted from W/O, b/c he didn't have a sin nature. You and I . . . our very bodies pull us towards sin. Why is it so hard? Because we have to fight ourselves and desires that we've had as long as we can remember.

Externally . . . the world offers a wide variety of pleasures and protections . . . In NoVA, we are blessed with innumerable options for food, leisure, education. This is a blessing . . . AND it is cornucopia of temptations.

Spiritually . . . the table of demons are not inert . . . they beckon you to come and eat. Just think of the adulterous woman crying out in Proverbs. The world is filled with devils crying for your allegiance.

This is part of Paul's point in labeling the tables "demonic" . . . they are empowered by invisible demons. Yes, the idols are nothing. But make no mistake, the demons are not

If a Gospel Culture reinforces our communion with Christ . . . There are other Cultures Resisting our Communion with Christ. **We must know this. . . prepare for the battle.**

Premise #4: We Resist the Devil's Table By Taking Our Gospel Public

Or, to say it more positively . . . A Gospel Culture will overflow into great CO-mission
= i.e., Mission together . . .to proclaim the gospel

Which brings us a kind of resistance to idolatry that is NOT legalistic... but spiritual / strategic.

You might say . . .

God's temple which gathers at Occoquan Bible Church on the Lord's Day is sent on mission as an army of disciples . . . to bring the gospel to the world.

As we worship and train at church, our communion empowers us to walk into temple precincts of the world . . . and instead of eating . . . we bring the bread of Christ.

AND . . . How do we do that?

We see the idols for what they are . . . props of the devil, who twist good creation to tempt us to worship it through various false gospels.

IOW = We don't see shops, schools, malls, marketplaces, offices and parks as neutral places where we work and play . . . Rather these places are our modern idol temples.

It's sort of like playing PokeMon Go . . .

Our two oldest boys have played this game together a few times . . . and one of the places we've played is in the little town of Occoquan.

To the untrained eye . . . Occoquan may look like a quiet colonial village with restaurants and historic markers, but in the world of PokeMon . . . it is filled with electronic creatures, PokeStops, Gyms, and the rest.

This isn't an endorsement of that game . . . it's an illustration. Like that game which calls you to see the world in a different way . . . we too must see the world differently

Friends . . . do you know that you are surrounded by temples, false gospels, and idols?

On one hand the world is filled with workplaces, stores, military installations, govt buildings, schools, parks and entertainment.

And MOST of these places are fine for the Christian to go and work and learn and play
But in ALL of these places there are demonic tables waiting for you to sit and eat.

Which means that if we are going to resist the devil . . .

We must keep constant communion with Christ and his people

AND We must see the world around as overrun with . . . temples, false gospels, and idols

Let's consider these how each of these works . . .

Temples, Gospels, and Idols

1. **Temples** . . . our world is filled with temples. In Corinth, there was one temple that was situated on the top of the hill. And it brought commerce, renown, and people to Corinth.

To renounce that temple was to stand against in the culture of Corinth. And yet, P teaches those saved by Christ now possess a greater temple. He speaks of this in ch 3 & 6.

Paul is fighting one temple with another . . . and we must do the same.

When you walk thru Stonebridge, do you see the temples? One of them has partially eaten apple on the outside . . . maybe it reminds of the Garden of Eden. Another overflows with meat, wine, and pastries . . . still others sell equipment for adventure & fun

The Apple Store . . . Wegmans . . . and REI . . . are not just stores. They're modern temples proclaiming secular gospels.

2. Gospels

Apple promises the latest and greatest in technology . . . So devoted are its patrons that they will happily identify themselves with its brand and mock all PC users.

Wegmans promises convenience and culinary indulgence for the weary laborer. Its bounty promises endless options to comfort us with fresh, hot, succulent food.

REI promises the gear you need to escape the urban jungle & commune with nature.

Do you see what I'm getting at ?? . . . These stores don't just sell needed goods, they promise blessings – joy, satisfaction, abundant life, and deliverance.

In this way . . . they are not stores. They are temples . . . and the products they sell come packaged with gospel promises . . .

Which leads to the third aspect . . . idols.

3. **Idols** . . . Can you go to these stores and avoid idolatry??? It depends!!

2 people can go to Apple . . . one can buy a watch to the glory of God and service to others; the other can purchase the same watch and further ensnare himself to his idol

One of them uses that device for purposes that honor God in service to others;
The other buys it and uses it as a status symbol, a source of security, toy for pride.

The difference is not in the product . . . but in the person's heart. Do they thank God for it . . . or do they trust in themselves because of it? **That's the difference!**

But that being said . . . what begins as a tool in service to God can just as easily become an idol – **How?** B/C our hearts are bent and the temple spirits beckon to us

→ Let's take . . . **The Smart Phone as One Example**

Although the iPhone has been around for only a decade . . . it has completely changed our culture. They go with everywhere . . . and though not living . . . they speak to us.

Just like the stores at Stonebridge, these phones **work** as a temple, **promise** a gospel, and **tempt** us to make them an idol.

Let's see how . . . we could consider the cell phone as a means of entertainment or vice, but let's focus on a more legitimate use... communications & productivity. **We can say 4 things**

1. **Beginning:** The world is filled with things to know, do, explore, communicate. *In a word productivity (i.e., knowledge, communications, information) is good and useful.*
2. **Problem / Fall:** Our finite minds, limited time, disconnected relationships hinder that. So we need more information, faster ways to work, techniques to better communicate.
3. **Solution / Redemption:** The iPhone (and all technology). It boosts productivity . . . and solve many problems. Therefore we put our stock, our trust in it and many other high powered devices.
4. **Resolution / New Creation:** If you accumulate the right apps and right products you can master your schedule and blaze all kinds of productive trails.

There's merit to these points. And there's nothing intrinsically idolatrous in having an iPhone. **But then why do we feel as though these SERVANTS have become our masters?**

The reason is because every time we use them . . . they are shaping us.
Remember . . . we become like what we behold.

The more you use your device . . . the more it uses you.

The more you press it . . . swipe it . . . pick it up and play with it . . . the more its pixels dazzle you/me, . . . the more dopamine latches your heart to its pings and pulses

You've read the studies . . . kids who experience heroin-like symptoms because they overuse tablet . . . adults who experience ADD-like symptoms . . . and teens who struggle to carry a conversation . . . but can trade emoticons for hours . . .

These inert things . . . are changing us. And not for the better.

What are we to do? . . . **We need a whole training on technology . . . but for today.**

I want you to see your device with new eyes . . . they are not just tools . . . they are themselves temples . . . w/ endless rooms that offer us all kinds of digital delicacies . . .

Even if do not sit down to commune at the worst of the Internet, the more you use the medium . . . the more the pages invite us to click, gawk, buy, and commune.

In response . . . we must **SEE** the way in which our phone tempts us to sin . . . we must **FLEE** from those patterns . . . and we must **COMMUNE** with Lord and his people, so that we have power to resist the demon's table as I open my phone.

And let's face it . . . we need to pray for one another . . . for our children . . . Pray for me.

These devices are more heart-shaping than we know . . . and that's when we use them appropriately.

If we are going to withstand the onslaught of the culture, we must make them our slaves . . . and not let them become our masters.

And that's why we must get right this rhythm of communion-culture-AND-co-mission

Today . . . If you don't know what communion with Christ is . . . you need to begin there.

Salvation doesn't come from learning how to master your idols . . . it comes by fleeing to the one who came to destroy your idols . . . and set your heart free in him.

Communion with Christ is the ultimate liberation from idolatry, and faith means believing that Christ will satisfy you more than any other created thing.

As Jesus puts in John 6:35: **I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.**

Faith may be best understood as a meal. If you have never tasted and seen Christ's goodness, or eaten his flesh and drank his blood . . . you don't know him.

Cry out for God to reveal himself to you and SAVE you from your idols!

If you do know him . . . you too need to cry out . . . and press deeper into your relationship

That means seeing the idols around you . . . esp. the ones that once ensnared you . . . FLEE from them! Run to Jesus. FEED on his faithfulness.

The answer to temptations to dine with demons . . . is to delight yourself in the Lord.

We won't WANT to feed on false things . . . if we are tasting Christ.

A woman drinks salt water . . . when she has no other water to drink.

So too . . . we will be most vulnerable to the salt water idols of life, when we are not slaking our thirst in Christ.

So . . . **grab** a hold of God's Word . . . **plead** for his promises to satisfy you

Cultivate a communion w/ him & his people; **abide** in the gospel culture of the church
Then . . . Go out into the world full of idols on mission to proclaim X wherever you go.

This is how we resist the devil . . . We walk in the power of his resurrection & tell others of the greatness of Christ and the emptiness of their idols.

And we return weary from the world . . . to drink afresh of his grace and truth.

Honestly . . . I don't what is going on in the locker room of the Cleveland Indians.

But I know that what is happening there is also happening in your workplace, school, and places recreation.

We are surrounded by idols and idol-worshippers.

And what Paul invites us to do is flee from those dead idols which lead to death

And to find life in Christ . . . that both saves and satisfies.

Can you believe that?

You won't if your eyes are glued to your device

But you can find freedom . . . if you cry out like the blind man desperate for Jesus.

Friends . . . let's cry out together

That our **communion** would begin w/ an expectant prayer for Jesus to be in our midst

That our **culture** would be filled to overflowing with gospel faith and Christ-like love

So that our **co-mission** would take that good news to the lost as we walk by the temples of this world.

Jesus . . .