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Sermon Summary

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Read this story recently from the Second World War. The Japanese had invaded this island. Kiska Island near Alaska. Volcanic Island. It had few weather station people on it. That was all. Anyway, the Japanese took it over. Put troops on it. Reinforced it. Americans were obviously not happy with. American territory. So they decided it take it back.it. 34 000 Americans and 5000 Canadians in Aug 15 1943 invaded. Recaptured it. You might think that is not a very remarkable story. Except that unbeknown to the Americans and Canadians, the Japanese had abandoned the place under the cover of bad weather, Not one single enemy soldier left. Yet 200 casualties. 32 deaths. Americans landed on one beach. Canadians on the beach a bit further down. Japanese had booby-trapped the place. However, because neither force realized there was no one shooting at them, they assumed each other were the enemy. Fired at each other. Therefore, a pointless invasion cost them 32 lives.

What is the point of this little story? So often, the church has wounded itself fighting over things that are not important. Not essential. In addition, paid a huge cost.

There can be a lot of misunderstanding around what Christians believe. Important we understand what the core beliefs around Christianity are. So often Christians have become divided over issues that are important but not core. The church over the centuries has done so much damage to itself, wounded itself over internal conflict. Most Often this has been around non core issues. Listed some areas disagreement among Christians. Some find this idea very unsettling. One Christian view on everything. If loved God, read Bible, all should come to the same conclusion. Not reality. People who love God sincerely yet have different beliefs on these issues. Sure, you could list more.

Of course, we always think we are right, other person is wrong.

How do we love one another esp. those with different views on Christian beliefs. Say Love yet bitterly disagree.

Accept one another. Accept that Christian hold different views of subjects Many Christians I know struggle with this idea. Label them Liberal. Judge Not really a Christian. Born again, Fundamental. Way of dealing with difference. Give a derogatory label.

Humbly realize that we don't know all truth. Look Bible own, fallen eyes. Most of us changed our views. When it comes to all there is to know about God and Bible. How much do you know 10% 20%?

Listen to other views without trying to convert them to our view. Will not work. Arrogant I know it gets my back up. Suggest some reading. See open to discussing a different view. However, let God do the work rather than us thinking we have challenge every belief that is different from our own. Love does not seek to control another person.

Love by accepting, acting humbly, and by listening. So often Christians do not do these basic things.

I have spent many years pondering this issue. Why are Christians so threatened by views that are different from their own on these non-core issues? A psychologist friend help me understand something important. What are we putting our faith in as Christians? For some Christians, their faith is in a set of doctrines. For them Christianity is mental assent to a list of creeds. Long list includes all sorts of topics. Very black and white on these creeds So if someone comes along and challenges one of these creeds. God created the world in 7 days. Cos that is, what is says in Gen. Black and white. Someone comes and says. Well actually, I do not believe this. Actually not what the text is trying to say. Evidence is clear that world created over a long period. Get a huge reaction. Why. Because you are threatening their faith. Their Christianity is at stake However, Jesus never said that Christianity was about mental assent to a list of creeds. At its core, Christianity is about a relationship with Jesus Christ. Our faith is in a person. Jesus Christ. Not in a comprehensive set of doctrines. Now sure, if our faith is in Jesus Christ, then we are going to have to have some core facts about who Jesus and what he did.

However, if my faith is in Jesus Christ, then I can hold my view about what I think about creation or any one of these non-core issues a lot more lightly. Celebrate our common beliefs. Help you understand Core Beliefs. This is what bring unity. We can have diversity of backgrounds, cultures, theological views on all kinds of issues. We are getting more diverse around here by the day. We should celebrate this. It is great. It is one of the things that God is doing in this place. Unity is around our core beliefs. Mission. Said last week. Seven core beliefs. Apology. Mistake with the seven put up. Should have included the Holy Spirit as one core category.

Last week we said that first Core believe is around God.

We believe in God: Who exists, and can be known is One God, 3 persons, Father Son and Holy Spirit, is glorious, sovereign, holy and loving is Creator of all things and at work in all things Amen

Many of you looked distinctly unexcited about this.

Look at this morning. Humanity, This might seem a funny thing to have as a core belief about. Not one that springs to mind immediately. Crucial. How we see ourselves.

2. We believe that every person;

- is created by God, is made in the image of God, is given purpose by God, rebels against God and lives in a fallen world

You might think. That is pretty basic. However, it is fundamental, core belief, and is contrary to most people's worldview today. Is Created by God that is our life is dependent on God. That means we are answerable to God. That means that life is not our own. This is profoundly different from most peoples world view. I am not answerable to God. I am not dependent on God. My life is my own, and I can do what I want with it. We understand this concept in employment. If a company employs me, they pay me, but I have to give an account of my time. What I do. We get that we are accountable. Outside of work, no, but at work yes. If we understand this at a work level, how much more so if we are created by God. If I create something, I have ownership of it. I can take a patent out to protect

it. I can copy right it. It is mine. It is answerable to me. We understand this, and yet we often fail to grasp it when it comes to our lives and ourselves.

Is made in the image of God If every human is made in, the image of God that means every person carries something of God. This sets humanity apart from the animals. This means life is sacred. It is not ours to take. This is at the heart of the current euthanasia debate and abortion debate. Life is not ours to take. We cross a line when we say that we have the right to take human life. Now we can't enforce this view on a population that does not hold this world view. So while I fundamentally disagree with abortion, make abortion illegal would not be helpful either, as it would simply lead to back yard abortions. So when it comes to what is the best law to have in a predominately secular NZ, it is very challenging. Not as black and white as some would like it to be. We are conflicted as a country on this. We think suicide is wrong, and there is a huge campaign against it. Yet at the same time, people are advocating the right of others to allow themselves to be killed in pain, or the right to take the life of an unborn child. These are challenging issues.

Every life is precious to God. This belief also cuts into issues around sexuality. If every human is made in the image of God, then the act of sex, that can bring human life into being is not only something fun and pleasurable, which it undoubtedly is, but is also something that cannot be taken casually or lightly or just seen as my right. The act of sex can bring about a human being and that human being is created by God and is made in the image of God. That profoundly alters how we view sex.

If every human being is made in the image of God, then you have never meet a human being, no matter how evil they may have acted, or how obnoxious that you find them, or just annoying, that is not made in God's image. It is because of this fundamental belief that people have dignity and worth, no matter who they are. It does not matter how disabled they might be. How limited their capacity might be. We care for every human being; because they are not measure by how productive, they are to society, or by what they might have done in the past. We value people because they are created by God and are made in his image. Human rights make no sense without this underlying viewpoint. Some smart secular people have realized this. No basis for the concept of human dignity and rights, above that of a fish. Unless there is something different about a person. That can only be conferred on by someone greater than humans can.

Is given purpose by God cannot find meaning, true fulfilment in life without God. Again, this is so different from many people today. Search for fulfilment in family, in pleasure, in achievement, in sport, in work. But the Bible repeatedly teaches that we can't live by bread alone. We cannot find happiness in sex, or work, or projects. Eccles We have a deep inner thirst than only God can fulfil

Rebels against God none of us perfect. Meet God's standards. We all try to take God's place and be independent, and make the rules for life ourselves. We want to be God and decide what is right and wrong. Sin has affected every part of our life, mind, heart, soul, emotions, and body however; you want to divide us up.

Lives in a fallen world Affected our relationship with God, we can't be in God's presence, unable to do God's will, subject to the effects of breaking God's law - death Affected each other, men and women, people in general, See genesis Adam and Eve fought, anger Cain and Abel, resulted in murder Paradise was lost Conflict, prejudice, greed, class conflict, social conflict, exploitation male domination, denying of equality, self centered love. Fear Adam and Eve hid from each other. Label Mask, so we do not reveal true selves to each other. Affected Ourselves. Inner battle going on. No peace. Cannot even keep our own standards. Paul says battle going on with in me. Restless, never satisfied. Deceive ourselves. No peace for the wicked. Is 57:20f Affected creation. No longer stewards of creation. Out to get from it as much as we can. Exploit it. Destroy it. Pollute it. Affected Relationship with Time. No longer live forever. Death is a result of sin.

God is the source of life, controls world, and give life it is purposes. Therefore, we depend on God, we are subject to God and we are to find life in God's purposes and rules

But what do we do. We depend on ourselves, and try to control the world, and others, and live the way we want. We want to be God. Relationships. We do not come to God when we fall out with others. We often try to control other people. Ourselves. We ignore God's rules about sexuality, forgiveness etc. We judge other people - I am better than they are. - Rather than focus on how far short we are from God. We are continually trying to be God. In charge, Controlling, judging, self-sufficient.

This basic understanding of who we are is one we often don't put into practise. How you went about last week, reflect this core belief about ourselves.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- # If we believe we are created by God, why do we not feel more accountable to God?
- # How would you respond to a person that says that humans are just another species on the planet, the same as any other?
- # In what ways is the image of God seen in a person? Share in your group one aspect of God that you see in each person.
- # Practise accepting one another by discussing euthanasia and / or abortion. Is it loving to take someone's life who is suffering? If you had the power to change the abortion law in secular NZ what would you do?
- # Discuss the idea that some Christian's faith is in a correct set of doctrines, not the person of Jesus Christ.
- # Have we lost the idea of sin and it's impact today compared the church in other times? Have we become flippant about sin, its impact and judgement? Is this core doctrine no longer believed?
- # Read again this core doctrine. What would it look like on a day by day basis if we were to live out this belief?