

Wednesday, February 24, 2016 - "That is Harsh..."

I can't keep count of the number of times I have been told, "you are too harsh..." or "...you sound mean spirited..." when I teach or preach. Sadly, I have experienced individuals who would get up and leave in the middle of a sermon or not return to a class I was teaching for the above given reasons.

I certainly understand the need to be careful in tone and choice of words when spreading God's word so that the message is about God and His glory and not about the presenter. However, most times I have found that the perceived harshness is not in the way the presenter comes across but from the truth of God's word exposing the darkness that this world entices us to take up and making us aware that our lives are not designed to satisfy ourselves but to serve God.

Ephesians 4:11-16 - And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Preaching the truth in love: the call for all of those who are disciples of Christ. There can be no greater illustration of one's love for you than to share The Truth, God's Truth. The message may seem harsh, but the intent is pure. Why is sharing The Truth so important?

In Dante's poem, "The Inferno", he said the sign hanging over Hell's door should read, "Thou Who Enter This Door Leave All Hope Behind." Many preachers won't "touch" the subject of Hell because they fear it is "too negative." If the mere concept of hell is too negative, what will it be like being sent there? How will God view those who, on the Day of Judgment, suggest, "You can't send us to hell: it's too negative there." How preposterous! There is NO HOPE in hell. It is eternal. Truth does not change simply because people dislike it.

Hell is a reality. Christ stated plainly that the majority of people are going to be lost (Matt. 7:13-14). If people are not motivated enough by the truth of His love for us and our love for Him to obey Him and by fear of hell to despise Satan, presenting 15-minute messages full of "positive" rah rah's, is not going to inspire anybody to take up his cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24; Luke 24:27). The appeal of Jesus is the salvation from hell that is available through Him.

So next time your toes get stepped on during the teaching of God's word, understand those toes are loved by the One who's word is being presented.

1 Tim.2:3-4 - 3This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.