

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 6/6/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, June 7 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, ask God to bring an end to violence by guns. Pray that the Holy Spirit guide us in finding common sense ways to limit the spread of guns that take so many innocent lives. Offer prayer for those who have lost loved ones the gun violence that seems to flood our country.*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German Lutheran pastor and theologian in the 1930s and 1940s. Though he had the opportunity to come to America to teach at Union Seminary in New York, he chose to remain in Germany, in part to protest the leadership and growing influence of Adolf Hitler. After Hitler eliminated all theological education, Bonhoeffer started an underground seminary to continue to train future pastors for his country.

During World War II, Bonhoeffer was invited to participate in a plot to assassinate Hitler. Bonhoeffer struggled with this. On the one hand, to assassinate Hitler violated the fourth commandment to not kill. But to allow Hitler to continue his genocide of Jews and other atrocities was also to tacitly break the fourth commandment. Bonhoeffer agreed to become involved in the assassination plot which failed. He was subsequently arrested and placed in a prison camp. He remained in prison until he was hung to death by the Nazis two days before the camp was liberated by the allies.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote several valuable books including The Cost of Discipleship. This particular book is useful in understanding his reasons for choosing to remain in Germany and agreeing to try to take the life of another. It also clarifies his discussion of cheap grace and costly grace. He describes grace as “the Church’s inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without questions or fixing limits. Grace without price; grace without cost!”

Cheap grace, Bonhoeffer says, is the grace we often claim for ourselves. It is “grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.” Cheap grace is all the blessings of God without any requirement on our part. There is nothing we have to do to receive it. There is nothing we have to do once it is ours. Cheap grace allows us to claim the forgiveness we receive through faith in Christ and then live our lives without any further thought about it.

Costly grace, on the other hand, is “the gospel which must be sought again and 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 Jesus Christ.” Costly grace urges us to put on the robe of discipleship, not for the purpose of winning God’s love. That is already ours. Rather discipleship is our response to what we have already been given at no cost.

Most of all, costly grace is this. “It is costly because it cost God the life of His Son...and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon His Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered Him up for us. Costly grace is the incarnation of God.”

When we claim to be believers but then fail to allow the life of Christ to shape and direct our lives, we have made it cheap. When we live as though Christ’s death on the cross means little to the priorities

we set and choice we make, we make it cheap. If we call Jesus Christ our Lord but then fail to be moved by what His life on earth was all about, we have cheapened both His life and death. Grace is cheap because it costs us nothing. But grace is costly because it cost Christ everything.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey