

Title: H3 (Hierarchy, Hats and Hair) pt.3

Text: 1 Corinthians 11.2-10

Theme: How we communicate our view of God

Series: 1 Corinthians #45

Prop Stmt. We have to express our right belief about God in a right way.

Read Text: 1 Corinthians 11.2-10

Sometimes parents play this little game with their kids. The kid asks a question that the parent really does not want to talk about, so the parent says, "We'll talk about that later." Fully hoping that the kid will completely forget about it. But, they don't! Not only that, but kids have this idea that life is neat, even if their room isn't, life is supposed to make sense and everything that happens is supposed to be in a specific category that comes complete with labels, rules and reason. It just doesn't always work that way – does it? So, on the way home from a family function, your inquisitive six-year old says – "Hey dad, if Uncle Charlie is so nice, how come he was in prison for 45 years?" That is a "We'll talk about it later" one isn't it?

If I were randomly picking passages from which to preach I do not think that I would pick the first half of 1 Corinthians 11. For one, I would be tempted to think that people do not want to get into this. Or, I don't want to get into this. In fact, in the span of seven verses, (4-10) I have identified six, "We'll talk about that later" topics. But, the benefit of preaching through a passage from the beginning to end, forces us to deal with those passages that I would be tempted to do a hop, skip and a jump over. But, in so doing, I would be a lousy shepherd and you would be deprived of some great stuff that we need in order to govern and order our lives and church. The sermon today is an attempt to start working through these six challenges.

Here is what we have learned so far in this section. Beginning in v.3 we see that God is a God of order. His orderliness is reflected in the genders that he has made and in the roles that he has given to each gender.

God made us in His image as a reflection of His person. God is a perfectly complete and perfectly functioning three-person unity who made us to reflect Him as we relate to each other, both in marriage and in the church. Our relationships are to be driven by our desire for the person and character of God to be set on display in everything that we do. But something happened along the way. That something is called the entrance of sin into our lives and into this world. The invasion of sin into this world took place in Genesis 3 and resulted in separating us from God and from each other. The image of God in each person is now scarred, marred and distorted. Our relationships with each other which were designed to reflect God Himself, instead of being driven by a mutual love became driven by our selfish, self-centered desire to be worshiped. So, instead of serving, we manipulate. Instead of leading, we demand and control. We do not get along with each other because fundamentally we are enemies of God. If we are not in a proper relationship with God, how can we ever be in a proper relationship with others? God knew that we had a problem that we could not solve. God sent us a Savior. God sent us

Himself. Jesus Christ, God and now man, came to this earth in order to live the life that I could not live, and in so doing, He showed me what it is like to really live, even as He lived perfectly. But, His perfectly righteous life was so much more than an ethical example. He lived a substitutionary life. He lived in my place, because all that I was capable of doing on my own was sinning. But Christ not only lived for me, He died for me. And because of His perfectly righteous life, He was able to pay the penalty for my sin. Now, I can be redeemed. Now, I can be bought back. Now, I can be restored to God and be brought into a relationship so true, so personal, so sacred that it changes everything about me. Fundamentally, it changes who I am at the very deepest part of my being. It also sets me free to be able to relate to other believers at a heart level. In fact, the greatest apologetic for the gospel that is presented over and over in the NT Scriptures is the relationships of believers. Our world does not get along very well. When people get along with each other because they love each other, other people stand up and take notice of that. The funny thing is, everybody outside of the church knows that is exactly what the church is supposed to be doing. Our relationship with God is to drive our relationship with each other. Over and over and over the Scriptures call us to live every moment for the glory of God (10.31). God has you here on the earth right now as a follower of Christ to show other people why He created the world. God created this earth as the kingdom for His Son, Jesus Christ. In the kingdom, people will respect, honor, love, care, protect, communicate, and help each other. And even though we are not in the kingdom yet, and the King has not returned yet, we are here to provide a taste now of what that is going to be like. The Christian life is not about, how you can learn a few things so that you can have the most problem-free, pain-free life now. We are here to put Christ on display in every single aspect of our lives, primarily in and through our relationships, since our relationships are such a personal way of showing off God. That is why, everything that you do matters. You and I wear different hats. In some relationships you are a leader, in some relationships, you are being led. In all relationships you are to be like Christ. In all relationships you are to be an example of what relationships are going to look like when Christ rules from David's throne over the earth. That is why...

***Christ-like Leadership initiates actions that are driven by love for those entrusted to your care. Christ-like Submission is seen in reciprocal actions that are driven by love for those who are entrusted with leadership.***

That is the big picture. You have to get that. If you get that, then you are in a position to work through the specific challenges of this text. How, do we, in the culture that God has called us to, put the glory of God, the person of God, the character of God on display? We do so by ordering our lives according to our God-given roles and by showing Christ through them. If you are a man, be a man for the purpose of showing off Christ. If you are a woman, be a God-intoxicated, Christ-exalting woman. Since you are either a man or a woman, then live out those God-made, Christ-exalting roles in a way that your world will understand that you are so satisfied and so happy in God that you have no problem with how He made you, and with how He has designed for you to operate. That is the challenge that is before us. Our world does not know what to do with different genders. God knows because God made them. God made them as part of His creation. The way

we live out our gender distinctiveness is to be a reflection of our understanding of God and His gospel. Our distinctiveness in gender ultimately reflects upon God. God (as a tri-unity) is perfect in essence and unity, and at the same time has an order of priority and function that does not threaten or undo its perfection of essence and unity. We (as a bi-unity) are supposed to live like that. Therefore, anything that we do in our relationships to blur that or to abuse that unity, or that blurs and abuses is a distortion of God. What this text is ultimately saying is this: If you are a man, be a man the way God wants you to be a man and make sure that you communicate that clearly to your world in a way that they will understand. If you are a woman, then be a woman the way God wants you to be a woman and make sure that you communicate that clearly to your world in a way that they will understand.

We begin with verse 4. This verse is a warning, isn't it? Here is my loose paraphrase of this verse. If a man is participating in a worship service in a manner that is not consistent with his man-ness he is bringing shame upon Himself because he is living in denial of the person that God has made him to be.

Interpretive Challenge #1. What does it mean for a man to have his head covered?

The first interpretive challenge that is presented in this text is located in v.4. What does it mean for a man to have his head covered? Answer this question – to yourself. Based on this verse, is it disrespectful for a man to wear a hat in a church service (not in a church building)? Keep your answer to yourself.

Several years ago there was a man attending here who was very sick with cancer. As a result of his chemotherapy treatments he was often extremely weak and cold. He saved his energy to be able to come to church, but he would have to dress in layers so that he would not get too cold. In an effort to stay warm, he would wear a hat to church. Should I have told him that he should take his hat off when he comes into church because if he doesn't he is being disrespectful?" What about the man who is wearing a toupee? Is that not the same thing? What about the man who because of chemo is wearing a toupee? What is the difference between wearing a head covering that is made to look like some type of hat, and a head covering made to look like hair (granted some are more realistic than others.) Are they not both head coverings?

The text literally says, "down from the head." This could mean an actual head-covering or it could mean long hair. The text does not specifically say anything about any material that is worn by the man, nor does it use a word that literally means hair. That is why, even though the NIV translators opted for head-covering in their translation, they also include long hair as an alternative reading, or a possible translation in the marginal footnotes. They do this, because the actual wording is not clear. There has been a lot of work on this subject, some of which I have read in these past few weeks. Here are a couple of factors in trying to figure out how this should be understood. Was Paul writing to a Jewish audience or a Gentile audience? (Acts 18.1-18) Are Jewish men ever known to wear any form of head-covering when going into a synagogue or when praying? Yes! So, if you assume that the church in Corinth was comprised mostly of Jewish people,

then the head-covering translation makes sense. But, there were clearly Gentiles in this church. That is patently obvious from the previous problems that the church was facing regarding the eating of meat that had been offered in the local idol temples. But, if we assume that Gentiles were the dominant make-up of the church, then we need to find out if these Gentiles were more Greek in culture or Roman in culture. Greek would appear to be the obvious answer since Corinth was located just south of Athens. But, Corinth was a Roman colony. The reason why this matters is because it was actually a common practice for Roman men to put on some form of head-covering when practicing religious type activities. In the Greek culture, the length and style of hair for men was a popular subject. Long hair was a sign of homosexuality; although that does not mean that every man who had long hair was automatically categorized as being a homosexual.

I am not convinced that the big deal here is whether or not a man wears a hat in a church service during which he prays or prophecies. Nor am I convinced that Paul is trying to give a universal hair-length rule. In fact, in all of the discussion that takes place about these the most important point is often completely overlooked. God is very concerned that each gender act and appear in a manner that is consistent with how God has made that gender. This section is not primarily about whether women should or should not wear hats because verse 4 is clearly dealing with men. This section is really dealing with Gender Identity in Public Worship.

If a man is participating in a worship service in a manner that is not consistent with his man-ness he is bringing shame upon Himself because he is living in denial of the person that God has made him to be. If you are a man, then the manner in which you dress should make your masculinity very obvious, especially when you are in a worship service. To pray to God (who made you as a man), and to give cultural clues that would given indications of blurring your gender is highly offensive to God.

Now, here is where it is very tricky and we have to be very careful, because these cultural clues change. For example, men and women dressed in ways that were similar and yet different in the OT and in the NT days. Men did not typically wear pants, and women did not typically wear dresses or skirts. Most wore some form of a robe. Head coverings and hair length in that setting take on a much greater significance because the differences were not as obvious, especially if the men did not have beards. So, in light of that, I do not think that 1 Cor. 11 is absolutizing a specific style of dress or of hair. But there is a twin danger that we have to work hard at avoiding.

Danger #1 – Creating a timeless standard out of a time-sensitive style.

Right now, I have been told that it is not stylish for men to tuck in their shirts. I have struggled with that, much to the embarrassment of one of my kids who tends to be a bit more fashion conscience than me. So, in order to save the family name from being forever engraved in the Geek squad hall of fame, I have attempted to not tuck my shirt in from time to time, but, while I admit there is a measure of comfort, it still feels weird. I recognize that tucking a shirt in, or not is not a moral issue. However, wearing your

pants so low that your underwear hangs out? There is a message that is driving that style, and it ain't comfort.

Let's say for example, that the skinhead movement really became prominent in our culture. Every skinhead had sworn an oath of hatred to the destruction of a certain group of people, let's say Italians. In reaction to that, we created a rule that no guy who was a member of our church could shave his head because we did not want any of our men to be identified with the hatred of the skinheads. I think you can see the problem with that. The symbols of different movements change with the times. But, if we keep making rules in reaction to those, then as time goes on, we will simply have a long list of styles that we have to avoid. The other problem is that we will be tempted to judge the heart of every guy we see based on whether or not their head is shaved.

Danger #2 – Pretending as if a time-sensitive style does not matter.

If shaving my head is communicating to my world that I am part of a group known for its hatred, I don't want to be identified with that group. So, on the one hand, I dare not create a timeless standard out of a time-sensitive style, but neither can I pretend that all styles are morally neutral. The actual style in a vacuum may be morally neutral, but you and I do not live in a vacuum. We live in a world with other people. And if you are asking the question – “Hey, what's wrong it – huh?” all of the time, you do not understand 1 Corinthians. Instead of being quick to defend my “right” to wear what I want to wear, and who cares what everybody else thinks, I have to be quick to recognize that the way I dress, the way I appear is sending a message to my world about my Creator and my Savior. Therefore, since...

God made both genders and God gave roles for each gender. God even gave different responsibilities in the church to different genders and since rejecting the roles or blurring the genders is an affront to God, I need to dress in such a way that I am making it very clear in the church and to my world, whose I am, which ultimately determines, who I am.