

Posaunenfest 2014 Brassband festival

**Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you,
in order to bring praise to God. (Romans 15:7)**

**Nehmt einander an, wie Christus euch angenommen hat
zu Gottes Lob. (Römer 15:7)**

**Aanvaar mekaar dan, soos Christus julle ook aanvaar het,
tot eer van God.**

Dear congregation,

A childhood memory of mine is that of sign hanging above a staircase:

“Kindlein, liebet euch untereinander!” “Dear Children - love one another!”

It was at a house of friends, where the children had their rooms upstairs. I suppose mom or dad put up the sign, hoping that it would make a difference.

On the other hand my grandmother used to say: “Kinder, Kinder, zankt euch nicht, spuckt euch lieber ins Gesicht” - “Children, Children, do not quarrel - rather spit into each others’ face” Somehow, instinctively, I liked that one more!

Love one another - yes - but ... at least the occasional spit in the face should be permissible!

The theme chosen for this brass band festival sounds good, but is also irritating. Yes, I know we should accept one another - but do we constantly need to be reminded of that? Would an occasional “love one another” not suffice! Do we as Christians need to harp on that topic?

Becoming a Christian is the most easy thing there is: Jesus died for me to set me free. I surrender my life to him, and become his child. Wonderful - he did it all for me!

But *living* as a Christian is a totally different story. Loving, accepting - does that really have to be? Most of the time I am quite comfortable with these statements. The problem arises in times of irritation, or when my feelings are hurt, or I have been wronged. Then I don’t want this “sign above the stairs” - I want to be able to vent my anger, to spit in another’s face. I won’t go so far as harming, or killing - but loving, accepting? Is that not too far to the other extreme?

What makes this little verse even more difficult are two little words: “just as”. “Just as Christ accepted you!”

Why do these workds make it so much more difficult?

Let me explain using an illustration.

I love Bach’s music. I can listen to it for hours. The problem comes when I am asked to play it. As beautiful as it sounds, it can be quite complicated to play. Apart from the fact that some notes go far to high for my liking, he often uses 8th and even 16th notes, in quick succession. It becomes a pain for me to play through the piece, and it sounds awful.

I think I might have found a solution: “Bach made easy”. I took one of his compositions and removed the disturbing and difficult notes, to create something that is playable to less experienced musicians.

I asked the leader of the brass band society to pick a few players to play for us: Bach made easy. Just listen and enjoy!

Piece is played

Bach made easy Dir, dir, Jehova, will ich singen



Could you recognise it? No? Was it Bach? All the notes used were compiled by him. All I did was to remove a few! But with that I removed the essence of his composition. No- this is no longer Bach!

That, dear sisters and brothers, is precisely what we as Christians tend to do with a passage like today’s, or with the command of Jesus to love each other. We remove all the uneasy parts, all those that are difficult to follow. We love and accept the ones we like. We accept those who think like me, look like me, are dear to me.

The rest - well, let's avoid them! Let's remove them out of sight! That way we can live our Christian faith in a nice protected comfort zone. "Christianity made easy!"

But just like the piece played by the brass players was not recognisable, the Christianity that the outside world experiences from Christians also often is such a distortion, that Christ's original "melody" is hardly recognizable.

That is why Paul in this passage does not write only: Accept one another, but: Accept one another JUST AS Christ accepted you!

To use the music image again: If you want to play music by Bach, you must play it from the sheet, JUST AS he had written it! Of course each musician still gives it his own colour and flavour by playing louder, softer etc. The intonation is unique, but the music, the sheet, is that of Bach.

"JUST AS Christ accepted us": It is Jesus Christ who sets the tone for our living. There are some passages of his "sheet music" that are very difficult to follow: Love your enemies; love yourself; forgive up to 70x7 times.

JUST AS - How did Christ accept us? He accepts us as we are, he touches our lives, forgives our sins. He works with us as we are!

As I said in the beginning: Becoming a Christian is the easiest thing in life - He Himself makes me His Child. But then, living as his Child - well, that is like playing from sheet music: It needs practise!

Let us now hear the musicians play the piece as Bach composed it,
Piece is played



How did this sound? Very different. Is it difficult to play? It depends. For those who have practised much, and who regularly practise, it comes almost naturally. For someone like me it will be torture!

When we say: "Practise love" we unintentionally hit the nail on its head: Love and acceptance of each other need to be *practised*. To follow Jesus, to accept JUST AS he has accepted does not come naturally. We need to practise it daily. But as we practise it, it will influence our attitude, the way we treat and see others. The more we practise, the easier it comes, the better it sounds! As Christians learn to accept one another just as Christ has accepted us, the beautiful music of the gospel starts sounding, so that the world does not hear "Bach made easy", "Christianity made easy", but this wonderful music of the Saviour who is busy re-creating, and bringing life into this world.

The theme of the Festival ends with the words: "in order to bring praise to God" - That is why we are here today - to bring praise to God. That also is what happens when the world experiences Christians living Christ's attitude: They praise God!

The temptation is enormous to delete what seems to be too difficult, to avoid what seems to be impossible. The call however is to "play the original", to stick to the music as Christ composed it and to practise living what he calls us to be!

Today's festival did not happen because some 300 players decided yesterday to play a few songs together. It is possible because 300 people have for months been practising for today. Not only that: Many have been practising for years and years to improve their playing. That is why we can enjoy the music today!

Let us practise to follow Jesus! Let us allow his music to flow through us, so that, as we practise and learn, the world can "hear the music", discover the beauty of the life that Jesus Christ brings.

We hear the piece again - as Bach wrote it!

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