

Christian proclamation as such, as the direct form of Christian witness that is distinct from the indirect form of Christian teaching, involves an imperative as well as an indicative—or, if you will, involves an indicative with a clear imperative meaning. In proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ, it asserts the decisive meaning of Jesus for us and summons us to appropriate this meaning, and thus to follow Jesus (in the language of the synoptic, or Galilean, tradition), or to be crucified with him (in the language of the Pauline, or Jerusalem, tradition).

But if this summons is, first of all, a summons to entrust oneself to the God who is decisively re-presented through Jesus, it is also, secondly, a summons to live in loyalty to this God and to all to whom this God is loyal. Moreover, since loyalty must always be concrete and specific, else it not be really loyalty at all, this summons certainly always implies and may very well include quite concrete and specific imperatives. (If this is obviously so in the case of the individualized proclamation involved in the pastoral care of individual persons and groups, it is hardly less so in the case of the generalized proclamation involved in preaching to an entire congregation.)

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