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Back in the 1980's the motorcycle company Harley Davidson was close to bankruptcy. For years Harley motorcycles had been the cycle of choice for rebels and outlaw bikers which the company chose to distance itself from because of this antiestablishment image. However, as they grew closer to bankruptcy the company leadership decided to embrace the hard-core biker groups that were showing incredibly faithful brand loyalty to them. So, they made a last ditch effort to survive by focusing on its legendary connection with rebelliousness, vitality and lust for life.

The strategy worked. Harley saved itself by embracing its outlaw image and by doing so won itself a whole new clientele. You see hog riders and cycle lovers want to see themselves as being part of another world despite the roles they might play between 9 to 5 as lawyers, accountants, or business leaders and that's who Harley appealed to and attracted. Bottom line: at the soul of the Harley is a rumble, a roar and an outlaw attitude that is positively otherworldly. But to be a true renegade rider, you've got to put your hope of hog heaven above everything else.

Now believe it or not there's a message for us here in this story about Harley Davidson. Jesus, in his great prayer in this morning's gospel hopes his disciples will be willing to be of another world, to be part of a countercultural spiritual life. And that's where the problem lies. Although we are called to a radical Christianity, too many of us are practicing a pastel Churchianity that has lost sight of its original vision. To put it in terms of Harley Davidson, we've become a gaggle of weekend riders rather than the gang of road warriors Jesus refers to in the prayer of our text. Our primary identity should be an outlaw identity - outside the law of human expectations and inside the grace of God.

If you look at the history of the early church it is nothing if not a gallery of outlaw Christians who were ready to rumble; Paul, Peter, Mary Magdalene, James, Mary, John, Salome, Ignatius, Lydia, Polycarp, Justin, Phoebe, Tertullian, Augustine. To continue with the motorcycle analogy; they were not weekend Christians but rough and ready, radical, everyday rider Christians who broke the mold wherever they went.

Committed Christians have got to hang tough and be Real Riders. True motorcycle riders have little time for what they call the new breed of bikers out there. The new breed of bikers is the many polished and well paid professionals who have discovered that while they were bred to be business people, they like to think they were born to be wild. They think they're outlaws on weekends, riding the roads with cup holders for their double decaf cappuccino and have saddlebags with a special pocket for their cell phones. Die hard bikers' disdain what they refer to as wannabees - those who only want to be weekend bikers. We cannot be weekend Christians but real rider Christians who practice our identity every day.

The challenge is always to remember who we are and whose we are. Jesus' prayer in John's gospel is for all of us, that we may know our identity beyond a social security number, a driver's license number, or a credit card account number. The prayer of Jesus is that we may know to whom we belong;" so that they may be one, as we are one."

You and I really do not find our Christian identity in what we know, or what we can do, or who we know, or where we live, or to whom we're related to, or where we were born. No, we find our identity in Jesus and the mission that he has set before us.

And that identity gives us a radical outlook on life. Sometimes people assume that being a Christian and being an American or a patriot are one in the same. Too often we think being a good Christian is wrapping the cross in the flag. That is not what Jesus calls us to do. That turns Christianity into a secular religion and that is not the radical identity Jesus has given us.

Henry Cadbury a professor of Divinity at Harvard once said there are two kinds of people in the world. There are therefore people and there are however people. Therefore people say, "there are children going to bed hungry in our community. Therefore..... and they proceed to devise and define the ways in which they can meet the need in their community.

However people make the same beginning statement, "there are children going to bed hungry, but they follow it with "however....and they explain why nothing can be done about it ,and all the reasons why the responsibility is not their problem and blames those who are in need."

Cadbury challenged his students to use this therefore, however exercise by continually coming up with need statements derived from their own communities and the wider community. He stated that the world needed fewer however people and more therefore people to do the work of God. It is the therefore people who are the real movers and shakers, the real rebels.

Just think of the disciples for a moment. When Jesus left them they were alone with no maps to guide them and no historical precedent to consult. They could have taken the however route and decided it was a good time to fold up shop and to ease on down the road back to Galilee and let bygones be bygones.

Or they had the choice to claim a therefore attitude. And that's what they did and that's why we are here today. You cannot do much with however people but therefore people put the radical nature of the gospel into action.

Too often however people try to freeze the universe into their own little time and space where God's blessing alone is housed for all time and for all space. But God's blessing is constantly moving and changing like the current of a river. The trick is to be therefore people who are constantly trying to "go figure" what really serves the cause of Christ and then to do it – and at the same time, the trick is to constantly try to "go figure" what we're doing that is no longer serving the cause of Christ and then to stop it.

Clearly, this is the hardest approach to being a Church because a living Church has to be in a constant state of evaluating everything we do as it relates to God's desire for all the world which is expressed perfectly in Christ's radical, reconciling mission to the world. The hardest aspect of this kind of life is discerning the will of God – it takes constant attention to prayer and study to truly understand when to stand timeless and transcendent as a rock and when to surrender to the river of life's advance and to let go, following the current in constant ebb and flow. Only when the Church can strike a daily, ongoing, and effective balance between these two stances can it say that we are following Christ's will. Only then can we say we are one, as Christ and God are one. Only then can we be true radical witnesses for Christ.

In the end Harley Davidson got it right when it discovered that hog riders are tapped into another reality, one that fills them with joy as they slip on their jackets and rumble off. We too are part of another world - the countercultural, confounding kingdom of God which calls us to be rowdy, radical and a whole lot more joyful. But we have a choice. We can

be a weekend Christian or the true radical, rowdy and joyful rider Christian who practices their beliefs everyday? Which are you? Amen.