

Duck Dynasty— Jeremiah 1:4-10
University of Charleston AND Saint Marks UMC, Charleston, WV –
25 August 2013 – 14th Sunday after Pentecost

⁴ Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ⁵ “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.”

⁶ Then I said, “Ah, Lord GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth.”

⁷ But the LORD said to me, “Do not say, ‘I am only a youth’; for to all to whom I send you, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. ⁸ Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the LORD.”

⁹ Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth. And the LORD said to me, “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. ¹⁰ See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”

Duck Dynasty is one of the most watched television shows today, and is beginning its fourth season, on A & E. Once more we shall see the antics of Willie trying to keep Si, Jayce, and the other employees of their duck call multi-million dollar business on task, always under the watchful eye of patriarch Phil and matriarch Kay. And then, after escapades that seem to erupt from script writing akin to a redneck Louisiana Andy Griffith culture, transported into the 21st century, the episode always ends with the whole family gathered for supper, with prayer being offered.

What I didn't realize until a few months ago, is that Phil Robertson was the quarterback for LSU, behind whom played later Pittsburgh Steelers 4-time Super Bowl winner, Terry Bradshaw. Robertson was the better quarterback in college, but he chose not to go into the NFL. He said that rather than trying to DUCK 300 pound linebackers trying to dismember him on every play, he'd rather go home and make duck calls.

It's hard to tell who made more millions of dollars – Phil Robertson or Terry Bradshaw. It might appear that they both (as Bradshaw was once accused) would have a hard time spelling C-A-T, if someone spotted them the C and the T. but those millions of dollars just roll right in.

Instead of ducking linebackers, Phil made duck calls.

Jeremiah was not offered a duck calling business, but he nonetheless, was trying to DUCK the call that God was trying to place on his life. God called Jeremiah to the

ministry of prophecy, and it seemed like all Jeremiah could do was to make excuses why he should not.

Indeed, **Jeremiah** was not alone in trying to DUCK God's call on his life. **Moses** made the excuses. **Isaiah** made the excuses. **Gideon** made the excuses. **Barak** made the excuses.

Throughout the Bible, whenever God called someone into duty, it seemed like those people were part of a great DUCK DYNASTY – all of them tried to DUCK God's call upon their lives. All of them, at least, until we get up to the **blessed virgin Mary**, whose response was ***“Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be done unto me according to Your Word.”***

But Mary's acceptance did not bring an end to the DUCKY DYNASTY; people have been ducking God's call for centuries since then – even unto today.

All the way from Jeremiah through today, with an important landmark in 1984, when Marvel Comics introduced into its Spiderman series a new nemesis for Spiderman, named **Venom**. Venom is an alien creature known as a **symbiote**.

A **symbiote** is an alien creature who cannot live on its own. It pals up to some other creature and offers its power, in exchange for the other creature's life energy.

The **symbiote** does not appear dangerous, at all. It is a pretty promise, offering “I'll-help-you-you-help-me” companionship. But the **symbiote** ends up owning its host, sucking its very life away. Until that time, when it's too late, the **symbiote** looks and acts very much like the host it will eventually kill.

Today we have a **symbiote** running rampant among us, that offers an enchanting alternative for those perspective **Duck Dynasty** folks – those who are looking for some way to **DUCK** the call of God upon their life.

And that **symbiote** has a name: **MORALISTIC THERAPEUTIC DEISM**. It goes around masquerading as Christianity, but it is a cheap substitute which sucks the very life out of Christianity.

Here are the **GUIDING BELIEFS** of **MORALISTIC THERAPEUTIC DEISM**:

1. A god exists who created and orders the world and watches over life on earth.
2. God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
4. God is not involved in my life, except when I need God to resolve a problem.
5. Good people go to heaven when they die.ⁱ

When God calls people to **commit themselves to spiritual disciplines that develop their relationship with God into a powerful, life-giving partnership for the Kingdom of God**, so many people today (particularly our young people) are able to duck the call, and fall back upon moralistic therapeutic deism as the role model they have seen lived out, and say, “No thanks; I’d rather not.”

When God calls people to **live the call of the Beatitudes on their lives**, so many people today duck the call, and fall back upon moralistic therapeutic deism as the role model they have seen lived out, and say, “No thanks; I’d rather not.”

When God calls people to **give their lives to help the least, the last, and the lost**, so many people today duck the call, and fall back upon moralistic therapeutic deism as the role model they have seen lived out, and say, “No thanks; I’d rather not.”

The contemporary **DYNASTY** of **DUCKing** God’s call, and **DUCKing** God’s call for a Kingdom of God based lifestyle, is different from Jeremiah’s attempted **DUCKing**, because so many people today don’t even realize what they are doing. The **sybiote** is sucking the very life out of folks who think they are Christians, and who don’t even recognize the difference.

Today, “we ‘teach’ young people baseball, but we ‘expose’ them to faith.

We provide coaching and opportunities for youth to develop and improve their pitches and their SAT scores, but we blithely assume that [their relationship with God] will happen by osmosis ‘when the youth are ready’ (a confidence we generally lack when it comes to, say, algebra.)ⁱⁱ

The **DYNASTY** of **DUCKing** God’s call, in snuggling up with the symbiote Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, has taught more than one generation that the **love of God, and the life of God’s Kingdom, are merely theological ideas, not really necessary for real human relationships and lifestyles.**

Our faith need only be one more choice on the smorgasbord of life’s options, this symbiote teaches.

All that is required, they learn from moralistic therapeutic deism, **is that they be nice and polite, take care of their own family, and (above all:) just be happy.**

The Kingdom of God, Jesus taught, is something for which the true disciple will be willing to give up all he or she owns in exchange. The Kingdom of God, the moralistic therapeutic deism symbiote teaches is OK so long as it conveniently fits into our schedule, and does not require a commitment of more than three weeks.

Indeed, the moralistic therapeutic deism symbiote tells us that so long as we keep watching a television show that ends in family prayer, then not much more is required. The only struggle to which Moralistic Therapeutic Deism calls us is to post and re-post on Facebook that “they” are trying to take our beloved Duck Dynasty off television, unless the prayer at the end of the show is deleted.

Really?

The good news is that God still calls; the **question still remains:** will you answer **“Here I am, Lord”** or **will you duck?**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. AMEN.

ⁱ Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of our Teenagers is Telling the American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 14.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*, p. 15