

Message #1042
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"I MET THE MAN"
{Proverbs 11:30 and John 1:35-51}

Trinity Presbyterian Church
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WE LIVE IN CHALLENGING TIMES

The period of time in which we live has been described by many as the Post-Christian and/or the Post-Modern Era.

Assuming that is true the question surfaces: How do we relate to the culture of today?

...how can the gospel of Jesus Christ be "packaged" in a way where it will be relevant in today's ever changing society?

...is the church outdated and out-of-touch with non-churched people?

THE POST-CHRISTIAN ERA

Just what does it mean to speak of a "Post-Christian Era?" First of all, the term "Post-Christian" infers that previously there has been a "Christian Era"--a time when the majority of people were Christian and demonstrating their faith by their life and lifestyle.

Just when was that era?

Was that in the first century? I don't think the early church would describe that age as the Christian Era.

...that was the day of the underground church

...a time when Christians were persecuted for their faith

...no, the first century wasn't the Christian Era

Was that at the time that Christianity was legalized under the Roman Emperor Constantine and then made into the only legal religion under the Emperor Theodosius? Was that the Christian Era? I think not!

Was the Christianity of the popes and kings of the Middle Ages a Christian Era?

...they thought so at the time

...but, we certainly don't look back upon it as an era that was very Christian at all

...it was a time of feudalism...crusades...and inquisitions...in the name of Christianity!

...was this the Christian Era? I think not?

What about the postwar period of the 1940's and '50's?

...there are those who would lead us to believe that was the Christian Era

...those may have been days of tent meetings, revivals, Youth for Christ Rallies, and when Billy Graham began his citywide campaigns and filled stadium after stadium around the world ...days when church attendance...church membership were at an all time high

...the day when "In God we Trust" was inserted into our Pledge of Allegiance...

...but, it was also a time when "higher criticism" {as it has become known}, but better defined as "liberalism," was popularized among the historic, mainline, denominations and taught in seminaries affecting the next generation of clergy

...yet even those days would not be known as the Christian Era.

...those were actually the days of the "Baby Boomers"-- those who...

...grew up with expectations of progress but became disillusioned with institutions

through the events of the 60's and 70's { Vietnam, the Kennedy and King assassinations, etc. }

...actually many of these left the church.

And today? We have "Generation X"--the children of the Boomers.

...often coming from broken and/or blended families

...they've been parented by the media

...AND...they are more than happy to embrace the ambiguity of post modernity because they are not used to experiencing security or clarity in their own lives!

...many of these are not only un-churched...they fit into the category of the NEVER-CHURCHED!

One more thing is that we no longer live in a society where it is just Judeo-Christian!

...there are more Muslims in the United States than there are Presbyterians and Episcopalians!

...soon there will be more Muslims than Jews!

...Buddhism is also a growing community in the U.S. with the great influx from Asia

...Hinduism has accompanied the millions immigrating from India

Therefore, Christianity is no longer the only option--there are more and more within our borders who offer alternatives to "salvation!" And...

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH HAS LOST ITS VITALITY, VISION, AND PASSION

The church of today is well described in Revelation 3 as neither hot nor

cold...repulsive. We are an institution that demonstrates the "form" but is powerless in our culture!

...we've lost our prophetic voice!

...we've lost our credibility!

...we've conformed to our culture so much that we are no longer recognized as God's people..."salt" and "lights" in our community!

THE POST-MODERN SOCIETY...

...is not easily defined because postmoderns do not fit into a nice little cultural box!

There is one thing ALL postmoderns have in common--they NEED to be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ...and, perhaps we need to become concerned with this and repackage the "good news" that we have to share in 21st century wrappings.

...we need to be looking at new ways to change our style without any change of substance

...the form constantly is changing...the essence of our message remains the same

We don't have an option! We must explore ways to repackage our message in a new and relevant way...that is our biggest challenge as a church!

1. Postmoderns have, by in large, never been to church!

2. They've been educated in politically correct schools that Christianity is bigoted and small-minded!

3. We live in the Silicon Valley--and flannel, incense, and candles don't work here!

Our postmodern families make six figures, have retirement plans and families and...they're not interested at all in spending hours each week in church!

OUR CHALLENGE...

...is to reach this generation!

...we cannot pretend there hasn't been a cultural shift

...we cannot preserve "what we've always done" without making transitions into "what needs to be done!"

The postmoderns do not see uniting with a church as necessary.
...church attendance is declining in our nation
...our denomination has lost over a million members in the last 40 years- -in a period of time when we merged with another denomination

THE ANSWER: IF THEY WON'T COME TO US...WE MUST GO TO THEM!

Dr. Eddie Gibbs, lecturer from Fuller Theological Seminary said recently...

"Churches...and church leaders...need to be risk takers. In a post-Christendom context, 80% of evangelism must happen 'out there!'

The answer is not seeker friendly services!' **THE ANSWER IS TO BECOME 'THE SEEKER.** 'The Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost!' **WE NEED TO BE A CHURCH THAT SENDS OUT MICRO-COMMUNITIES, WHO HOLD EACH OTHER ACCOUNTABLE AND BRING THE GOSPEL INTO THEIR CONTEXT!** People **NEED** to see others becoming Christians to generate 'a culture of evangelism!'"

I challenge Tom Waddell and Vincent Arishvara to help us to retool our evangelism message for today's culture...and I'll work with you! We need Sunday School Classes that prepares us to "GO...and make disciples" rather than to think "if we build a church...they will come!" Nonsense!

CONCLUSION--APPLICATION

The great commission challenged us to "go" and tell others that we've experienced the living Christ...just as Andrew told Peter: "I met the man!"

How is that done?

...we've all been turned off by high pressure evangelism arm twisting

...by phony beach surveys

...by inconsistent believers

So, how **DOES** one go about inviting someone to worship...to church?

...we must demonstrate that we genuinely care for the individual!

...we must convince by life and lifestyle that we've been made new by the living Christ.

...we must be **REAL!**

...we must take time and show concern-

WHAT IS YOUR PASSION?

We can grow as a church...if each one would only reach one person this year...think of where we'd be one year from today.

ALPHA is a means of bringing them in...! There is such a thing as a free dinner!

ALPHA is for...

...people interested in investigating Christianity--**WITH NO STRINGS ATTACHED!**

...newcomers to the church

...new believers

...and the topics are relevant...

...Who is Jesus?

...Why did Jesus die?

...Why and how should I read the Bible?

...Why and how do I pray?

You will **NEVER** have a better open door than right now. Get on the phones...send emails...and let's pack out Fellowship Hall on January 20th at 6:30 P.M. when we host our next **ALPHA** dinner.

This church can/will grow when the people of this church have a passion for souls...

...who will you bring to Jesus in 2004?

...make a list...and begin praying now!

Are we the church that cares? I hope so! I think so! But, you hold the answer!

Let's go for broke this year!