

Real Christians

Much of what we read and indeed see in our culture today talks about the loss of interest in the organised church but insists that the hunger for the spiritual is no smaller than it ever was. People today are looking for something genuine, and personal interaction. It sounds like our post-modern age is looking for the same things people have always looked for, but they no longer have the expectation of finding it in the church buildings, nor do they really trust that any organisation is necessarily going to meet their needs. They have grown up without that expectation or with the experience of churches that lost their focus on Christ and replaced it with programs and entertainment, or other agendas.

What the world around us needs is to meet real Christians, people for whom the Gospel is real, and vital, and clear. Doctrine is essential to those who know the truth, because sound doctrine teaches that truth and makes it something we can deliver to the neighbour and the next generation without losing the power it brought to us. Those who have forgotten repentance often forget sound doctrine as well because once you lose track of precisely why your religion is precious, it becomes very reasonable to iron out those difficult truths and challenging teachings and make everything seem much more palatable and “user friendly.” But the world around us doesn’t need to meet the kind of Christians that have a personal and very flexible religion. They need something solid and reliable, that won’t change on them as the culture shifts. A foundation needs to be strong and stable or the things built on it shift and collapse.

So the world needs to meet Christians who know the solid foundation of Christ, which is only solid when you see your sins and the great danger they present, and repent of them, and then know Christ, and His grace and forgiveness, and genuinely trust in Him. For some, that sounds like the religion you already have, and you wonder why we need a reformation. Well, not everyone needs to turn back to the true foundation because they never left it - for which they owe God great thanks. Church after church, and denomination after denomination have left it, though. So the reformation is still needed.

Remember, proper reformation never takes you somewhere new. It always takes you home, to the way things ought to be, which is usually to take you back. In his 95 Theses, Luther began with: *Our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, when He said “repent!”, willed that the whole life of believers should be repentance.* We need to keep Christ clearly in our minds and understand just how precious and important His work for us is, and His grace and forgiveness is for us. Our nature will always try to tell us that repentance was ‘back then,’ and now we are good to go. God’s Word tells us a different story. It says that ‘we daily sin much,’ and are in need of the constant reformation of repentance and forgiveness. Without it, we will inevitably make too much of ourselves, and far too little of Christ and the cross.

We also need to keep an eye on the church around us, doing our part to keep it on the foundation of God’s Word and not merely human opinions about God’s Word. It is far too easy to lose one’s focus and wander away into self-made religious ideas. The church has been doing that for two thousand years, over and over again. Celebrating the Reformation of Luther’s time helps us keep that task in mind.