

The Constant Blowing of Popular Opinion

We are used to things bending and twisting in this life, like a reed in the wind. You know what I am talking about. A reed is a tall grass with a heavy top and a weak stem. And so, since a reed has a heavy top with all sorts of growth and often a hollow stem, it gets pushed in whatever direction the wind happens to be blowing. The point is, in this life, we are used to people, places, and things being like a reed and bending the way that popular opinion blows.

There are indeed many persons, places, ideas, and things in this life that are nothing more than a reed blowing in the wind. The wind blows one way, and everything leans with the wind. And when the wind changes direction, everything snaps back the other way. Some of these changes to the wind and the bending of the reeds are oblivious to us, since we are often too busy with our own lives – paying bills, working overtime, washing dishes, and somehow managing to feed our kids. Sometimes we can feel the change of the wind, but then we do not notice anything because everyone is leaning in the same direction. So, we shrug our shoulders and lean with them without much thought.

Things are further complicated, though. Oftentimes, people and institutions of power reward individuals who will be a reed that leans with their ideological wind. In other words, people and institutions of power will often blow like the wind. And to get people to not buck their wind, these entities of power will give lush rewards for bending the way that they want them to bend. You know what I am talking about? Just watch the television, and from time to time, you will see high-profile people on talk shows adamantly fighting for a certain cause. And you may say to yourself, *“I never knew this pop artist, who typically sings about boys and sex, had such strong feelings about world economics and political policy.”* Or *“Who would’ve thought that behind this actor’s potty humour on the big screen would be such depth of insight over such complicated issues in the world?”*

We must not be fooled. Reeds will blow in the wind to match the popular opinion of the day. And reeds will blow in the wind to appease certain powerful people and powerful entities. These reeds bend the way of the powerful winds because they like the handouts and lush treatment.

At one time John the Baptist was in prison. He sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the One to come or was there another. Jesus pointed them to His mighty works of healing and His proclamation of the Good News to the poor as the fulfillment of Isaiah’s messianic prophecies (cf Is 26:19; 29:18; 35:5–6; 42:18; 61:1–2). These words and deeds truly showed that He was the promised Christ. After John’s disciples left, Jesus turned the crowd and said, *“What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed driven back and forth by the wind? What did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft robes?”* (Matthew 11:7-8). Jesus had established who He was. He now asks the same rhetorical question to explain John’s mission.

John the Baptist is not some reed blowing in the wind. In other words, Jesus notions that John had convictions. He preached the Law and did not water it down. John was not fickle. He did not lick his finger and put it in the air to test which way the wind of popular opinion was blowing. John said it as it was. John was not a recipient of fine clothing living in a king’s house because he was a mouthpiece of the rich and powerful. John did not yield to popular opinions, and he certainly did not yield to the influential and the mighty.

When we come to church, open the Bible, and encounter Biblical characters such as John the Baptist and Christ Jesus, what we typically shall find and see is not just another reed blowing in the wind but something completely contrary to the fads of the present day. Think about it for a moment. Did John the Baptist care about the Pharisees and Sadducees? No! He blasted them. Did he care about King Herod? Not really. The reason was, he was not a reed blowing in the wind. And what about the Bible? Do the words of the Book always sound politically correct? Are the words of the Bible in tune with the sentiments of the present day? Does the Bible read like every other contemporary popular book, or does it stand out as something completely different? And what about Christ Jesus? What do we expect to see when we encounter Jesus in His Word? Is He a reed that blows in the wind agreeing with every single popular opinion of culture? Is Jesus open to the highest bidder? Is He corruptible by money and power? When the devil offered Jesus the wealth of the world, did Jesus say, *“Where do I sign up?”*

Dear friends, thank goodness that John the Baptist, Christ Jesus, and the Word of God are not reeds blowing in the wind. Thank God that Christianity is not for sale to the highest bidder. Thank God that this Christian faith does not care which way the wind is blowing. Can you imagine for a moment if John was a reed blowing in the wind – speaking only pious coffee mug sayings that He had heard on a recent daytime talk show? Can you imagine if Jesus wore soft robes given to Him by people of power and only said what you recently heard on three different nightly news stations? If this were the case, everything would be lost. Seriously, think about this! If Christ Jesus were a reed blowing in the wind, perhaps He would not have died on the cross. Perhaps He would’ve gone along with the popular opinions of the day, conquered the Romans, and established a worldly empire while forgetting all about the forgiveness of sins and victory over death.

Furthermore, perhaps, if the church were a reed blowing in the wind, it would not preach Law and Gospel but would tickle ears by following the clichés, trends, and ideologies of the age.

But John the Baptist is not a reed blowing in the wind, and neither is Christ and His Word. Furthermore, the church should not be a reed blowing in the wind or for sale to the highest bidder. Instead, the church stands before our eyes, telling us how God has received us.

Hear this loud and clear! It is against the very foundation of the church to be a reed shaking in the wind and imprisoned to the winds of power and influence because it is against the very person and work of Christ, our bridegroom. And so, when people have no stomach for solid teaching but fill up on spiritual junk food – catchy opinions that tickle their fancy – the church does not turn its back on truth or bend to the winds of popular opinion. The church accepts the hard times along with the good. It stays on point. It remains steadfast, even unto death. It remains firm rather than fall away. The church does not care about popularity, power, or influence, for these go the way of a bent reed. The church’s foundation is not a bent reed; the church does not put its sail up to catch the wind of culture but instead collapses upon Christ Jesus the rock. Regardless of which way the wind blows, Christ Jesus and His Word are unchanging.

In every storm of life, Christ is the anchor that holds us fast. In this vale of tears, Christ’s rod and staff keep us secure. And when the winds does blow, and the reeds bend all around, we listen to the message of John the Baptist, letting his thundering message of Law drive us to repentance and prepare us for the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. As we hear and receive Jesus, we also know that Christ is not a reed that blows in the wind but a Rock that stands secure for us.