

Is It Time for a Change?

"The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Repent and believe the Gospel." Mark 1:15

Well, campaign season is gone into hyperdrive and suddenly the new buzzword is CHANGE. Each candidate wants you to believe that he or she is the one that can go to Washington and CHANGE to culture for the betterment of all Americans. Don't get me started on this; all I will say is that there is no chance of any one individual changing the culture in politics than there is of one person being able to change the weather. Vote for whoever you want to, but don't be fooled into thinking they can really change anything. It's all like rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic.

IF YOU ARE REALLY LOOKING FOR CHANGE, there is a better place to look. In John 10:10 Jesus spoke about experiencing abundant life. Most people think that Jesus is referring here to going to Heaven when you die, but that would render life in this world a meaningless drudgery, wouldn't it? The vast majority of the teaching of the Bible is directed to the way we should approach THIS life (because, if you are in Christ Jesus, your ETERNAL life in Christ is already well under way). Unfortunately, most Christians don't come anywhere close to experiencing the fullness of that abundant life Jesus talks about – Love, Joy, Peace, Purpose, Power, etc. Why is that?

Romans 12:2 reminds us that the only way to be truly transformed is by the renewing of our MINDS. You may have given your life to Christ at age 10 or 16 or 25 or 65. However, by that time SIN – in the form of the dynamics of the ways this world thinks and acts– had already programmed you to think and act in ways that are contrary to God's abundant life for you. Simply put, the world says your worth is based strictly on your performance. The better you perform, the better you keep the rules, the better you

are at living a holy, perfect life, then the more you are worth to others and to God. That is what the world wants you to believe. Most of us believe it too well.

In a word, then, the problem is FEAR. The fear of “not being enough” and the fear of “not being loved” run in the background of our lives constantly, conjuring up images of failure, punishment, rejection and shame. Because of this fear, we don’t really feel safe in our relationships with anyone – especially God!

So, along comes Jesus and, according to Mark 1:15, the first public remarks Jesus made were, “Repent and believe the Gospel, because God’s Kingdom is happening right now!” Now, here is the twist: most people think that “repent” means to feel sorry for their sins and promise to do better next time. The actual word in the Greek language of the New Testament means to – get this – have a change of MIND!! Now, the implication is that this change of mind will lead to a change in your choices and actions, but it starts with being transformed by the renewing of your mind. Jesus is literally saying, ***“Stop believing what you used to believe and start believing the Gospel instead.”***

The Gospel says that, because of the grace of God and the blood of Jesus, you are now forgiven, welcomed, accepted and adopted by God, not based on your performance but based on His limitless love for you. The Gospel says you are a new creation, old things have passed away and new things have come. The Gospel says that we can do all things through Him who gives us strength. The Gospel says God will meet all of our needs through His riches and glory in Christ Jesus. The Gospel says God knows our needs even before we ask. The Gospel says YOU HAVE BEEN BLESSED with every spiritual blessing that heaven has to offer. Do I need to go on?

The problem is that, even though we have entered into a faith relationship with Jesus Christ and our spirits have been renewed, OUR MINDS STILL DON'T BELIEVE THE GOSPEL! We literally need to reprogram our minds to live according to the potential our spirits have already received. Too often, we are told ABOUT these promises, but we are not told how to LIVE OUT this promises. We are not told how to go about renewing our minds.

That is what we are working on each Sunday morning right now. It would be great if you could be there to hear this in person. If you can't, go to www.Christ-Redeemer.org, click on the Weekly Services link, and you can listen to a recording of the service online or download it to your computer. This week we also posted the Slide Presentation I used during the sermon. For now, please remember this little formula:

Thoughts lead to Emotions and Emotions lead to Actions.

If we want to start living in the fullness of what Jesus has to offer us, we must REPENT: Quit believing what the world has taught us to believe about ourselves and about God, and start believing the Gospel instead!

Blessings, *Jackie*