

From Pastor Jim's Desk

## **Evangel-Less Christianity**

We are living in a culture that has pretty much taken the Bible out of main stream thinking and belief. Once mankind was free from any Biblical restraint, our culture quickly concluded that we did not need any Word from God to give us any moral restraint (found so easily in nature and her laws) and the explanation for the origin of the species. The Bible was dead. God was dead. Mankind was free and had the power to self-diagnose his perfect health formula (hence all the self-help books on just about every subject known to man). This very optimistic but still very delusional view of mankind changed drastically after World War 1. Now, man was dead too.

Our culture moved from total optimism in man's ability to create his own destiny to a very pessimistic view of total despair and disillusionment. All the arts, painting, music and literature, moved from being viewed as gifts from God to a narcissistic effort to disturb and shock our very conscience. Good and evil were thought to not exist, suggesting instead that everything was good, if it was good for the individual person. All views of the hereafter were thought to be equally valuable, just different roads leading to the same place. Into this void of spiritual certainty, the Eastern Religions has rushed right in. Buddhism, Hinduism and Muslimism quickly pointed out that Christianity had really kept mankind from discovering inner divinity and his essential oneness with the world.

Christians were defenseless against the inroads of Eastern and New Age religions. Instead of proclaiming the faith once delivered to the saints and defended with factual arguments over the centuries, Christianity moved from defending the Gospel to being the Gospel. The loss of defending the Gospel has moved to a loss of telling and sharing the Gospel to now the loss of the Gospel entirely.

## **Ignore Defending the Gospel and You Get a Defense-less Christianity**

We are encouraged, nay commanded, to defend the Gospel in 1 Peter 3:15, where he writes, "Be ready always to give a defense for the hope that is within you, yet with gentleness and reverence." Two themes come through very clearly:

First, defending the faith is biblically commanded. It is not optional to give a reason for the hope that is within us, nor is it relegated to the Pastoral office, or to a "special" class of "intellectual" Christians with a university degrees.

Second, sharing your life's story or testimony, while very good, is not defending the Gospel. We are to be giving reasons why we believe in Jesus' perfect life, His atoning death and resurrection from the dead and are to persuasively present the evidence that demands a verdict.

It is interesting to note that people most involved in defending the Gospel in the last century were not trained in formal theology at all (C. S. Lewis, G. K. Chesterton, Dorothy Sayers, Charles Williams and J. R. R. Tolkien). One need not have a seminary degree to be effective in the defense of the faith within our culture.

## **Defense-less Lutherans**

Just when Christians had every reason to provide factually based responses to the challenges of our culture, many Lutherans taught that defending the Gospel as unnecessary and uncalled for. Many thought and taught that this kind of “giving defense” was to be exclusively provided by the trained clergy. Defending the faith was replaced with simply preaching the Word, with no eye to or desire for actual defense of the Gospel. Preaching the faith is not defending the faith. Defending the faith means assembling the arguments and evidence to present the truth in as clear and concise manner as possible.

Today, any number of religious options are being presented; all claiming to change one’s life, but unfortunately none are effective or offer any persuasive factual evidence for the truth of the Gospel. The fact still remains, Christians do have answers, factual evidence for the truth of the Gospel. And, Christianity is the ONLY religion that can claim this! Just sharing what Jesus did is great, but we can add so much more to that truth when we realize that it can be defended, factually with clear and irrefutable evidence.

### **Defending the Gospel as Evangelism**

It is never been a question of defending the Gospel or sharing the Gospel. It is not defending verses evangelism. Nor is it evangelism without defending. We Christians must see that the truth of our sharing the Gospel lies in the facticity and centrality of the death and resurrection of our Lord for the forgiveness of sins. It has always been evangelism AND defending.

It is high time that, like St. Paul in Acts 17, we defend the Gospel in the public square since the current brand of evangel-less Christianity being offered is really no Christianity at all.

Pastor Jim



**Saturday, May 12<sup>th</sup>**  
**9 am – 2 pm**

➤ **MU-102 – “7 Styles of Faith Sharing”**

- **What style are you? Learn the faith sharing style that best fits the kind of person you are.**
- **Cost? \$10 covers materials, snacks and lunch.**
- **Register on the Sign Up Sheet in Church Lobby.**

# CHRIST IN THE PASSOVER

On Sunday, May 13<sup>th</sup> at  
7:00 PM, Pastor Jim will  
teach on the Passover  
and how Jesus Christ  
filled up this Old  
Testament Rite.



**St. John Work Day**  
**Saturday, May 19<sup>th</sup>**  
**9:00 am to 3:00 pm**

- What to Bring? Any yard equipment, gloves, etc. Lunch will be provided;
- Sign in Church Lobby;

