

Faith formation in a secular world: Living the way of Jesus in a World of Complex Issues

LIVING THE WAYS OF JESUS IN A NON-TRANSCENDENT
“IMMANENT FRAME”

I Peter 1, 2

Brentwood Hills Church of Christ fall, 2018

REVIEW

- “Immanent Frame” is from Charles Taylor’s *A Secular Age* (2007)
 - A closed world structure, no metaphysical reality, nothing transcendent.
 - Language house, social imaginary – assumed presupposition in culture.
 - “Nova effect” is the explosion of religious and spiritual possibilities...
 - Authenticity
 - Expressive individualism
 - No ontological reality beyond one’s own epistemology – I make myself as well as the reality in which I choose to live.
 - Post-truth...
- Faith is that which defines the reality in which we choose to live.
 - It is not faith vs. reason – faith is that which gets me up in the morning.
 - In a world of “nova effect” we need to live and speak into kingdom truth

We no longer live in a culture that privileges Christianity

- Studies show precipitous decline in those claiming Christian faith or even association with the Christian faith.
- Moral failures of Christian leaders, scandals of child abuse, etc.
- Advances in naturalism, aggressive New Atheism...
- For many, pragmatic decision to walk away – “my former faith did not serve me well...”
- New classification – apatheists – general malaise, loss of hope
- This culture is deeply influencing our youth
- Secular 2 institutions of faith will not call them back to faithfulness – they are not equipped or designed to do so.
- So, then, what can we do?

Convergence of Experiences...

- For almost 20 years I have taught courses in apologetics.
- Incredible change in our student body.
- For years, students divided into groups – made compelling presentations on reasons to believe in God and Christ. But the “needle” didn’t move...
- Mark Scandrette, *Practicing the Way of Jesus*. Idea of “do-jo’s”
- Began, 7 years ago, new approach – practicing way of Jesus in community
- Paradoxical teachings. If indeed the Word made flesh, experientially must be verifiable. We are a research university, let’s put it to the test...
- Similar to amazing stories of our athletes who have come to faith.
- Challenge: Why did Jesus come, and what does Jesus expect of us as his followers? What is our role in the mission of God?

The Challenge of Primary Identity...

- Who are you? What narrative are you participating in to produce what you want to become?
- What is your functional 2nd order story? (not your “stated” faith)
- Homework from last week – how do you spend your money, time, emotions, imagination, and concerns? Are you shaped by the world or the redemptive, transformative story of being a “living sacrifice?”
- If someone followed you around for a week, what story would your life tell?
- Consideration of identity texts in 1 Peter 1 and 2.
 - “A call to arms” 1 Peter 1:13-16
 - Identity in the world – 1 Peter 2:9-12
 - Be aware of the consequences - 1 Peter 2:20-25

Excerpts from the letter to Diognetus: (circa 130-200 A.D.)

“Christians are indistinguishable from others...yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of foreigners...they live in the flesh, but are not governed by the desires of the flesh...Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law. Christians love all men, but all men persecute them...They live in poverty but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything...A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult...”

To speak in general terms, we may say that the Christian is to the world what the soul is to the body...

How is the Christian Church Known in Today's World?

- The survey says...
- Our calling? Not to be counter-cultural, but to be an alternative culture.
- We live the ways of Jesus in communities of faith, holding one another accountable.
- What did Jesus come to do? In John 17 – Jesus says his work is finished!
- As he was sent, we are sent.
- We are called to bear faithful witness to the master narrative (next week's study).
- We are called to declare there is only one God (purpose to live, our highest value) and that Jesus is indeed the Christ (the true manifestation of life).

The Missing Peace? The Work of the Holy Spirit

- Here introducing topic that we will explore more fully in coming weeks...
- Jesus prayer in John 17 follows powerful explanation of the coming Spirit of God – the paracletos – the One to walk beside us and guide us to peace (*shalom*).
- Our problem of Aristotelian self-actualization.
- Jesus demonstrates to us how to live a life led by the Holy Spirit.
- Not possible with ego-centric life – so we each must die...
- “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20)
- Walk not according to the flesh (the ego-centric life) but according to the Spirit. You are living in the realm of the Spirit (Romans 8:1-11)

Review and Homework (Again?)

- Difficult challenge – presenting the Gospel of God’s kingdom in a world that ridicules transcendence. Our advantage? The Spirit dwells in us...
- People believe what they believe because they find it to be true – it is the best narrative they know.
- They will stay where they are until convinced there is a better story that promises a better outcome, and gives life meaning and purpose now.
- What does “the Jesus life” look like for you?
- Choose a paradoxical teaching of Jesus and put it to the test: (examples)
 - Live in such a way that you hold no ill will towards anyone. Resolve...restore...
 - Rather than retaliating, show acts of generous kindness towards “enemies.”
 - Help someone in a meaningful way that has nothing to give back...
 - Put the needs of others ahead of your own.