

Good News for Today – Call to Action

The good news of Jesus Christ changed my life. Maybe it changed your life, too. I grew up in a Christian family, but it was just before I turned 21 that the Christian faith became real for me. Since then, I have been committed to sharing the good news with others. Today, I believe that the world needs the gospel of Jesus Christ more than ever. Sadly, though, it seems as if the Church is no longer a place of good news. I say this for five reasons.

The Five Problems

First, for many people the Church is *bad* news. It has been damaged by scandals over abuse – and far worse, it is guilty of deeply damaging vulnerable people. The Church of England has self-identified as racist and has brought into focus its own links with chattel slavery. It is sorely divided by divisions over identity, gender and sexuality. None of this endears it to wider society.

Second, in some places proclaiming Jesus Christ as good news has been superseded by institutional concerns. This was brought into focus for me in my annual review. I was asked, for example, how I worked “to improve the Diocesan Board of Finance’s impact and reputation”. None of the forty questions mentioned, or even alluded to, the Christian faith.

Third, there are those in senior Church leadership who see their task as managing decline. They appear resigned to the fact that congregations will inevitably continue shrinking. Maybe they have stopped believing that evangelism is an effective remedy which might actually lead to growth. I am deliberately not singling out any individuals here. Church leaders need our wholehearted support.

Fourth, even among some ordained clergy, there is uncertainty as to what the gospel is. I asked one new cleric: “Why is the Christian faith good news?” They replied: “God loves us.” “That’s great,” I said, “but what about Jesus?” Their response was: “Jesus shows us God’s love.” Looking for something deeper I asked: “Would you want to say anything about the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection?” Mystified, they replied: “No. I don’t think so.” If even ordained clergy can’t communicate the good news in a clear, attractive and compelling way, what hope do we have?

Finally, when we *do* have good news, how relevant is it to today’s world? We should have something positive to say about climate change, rising populism, artificial intelligence, disinformation, social media, divided communities and international conflict. However, we are rarely good at making links between the good news of our faith and these pressing issues. It is true that we proclaim forgiveness for individual sin; except that personal guilt is not most people’s primary concern. It would be ideal if we had something *practical* to offer – just as Christians of the past built schools and hospitals.

A Proposed First Step

These problems may be insurmountable – but they may not be. With God’s grace, if we step out in faith, we might be able to start to turn things around. We won’t know unless we try. So, I am hoping to bring together a group of interested and passionate people to do something. We will have an initial online conversation to consider how we might respond.

If this call resonates with you, and you would like to join in, then please do get in touch. I would love to hear from you. The world needs people who still believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.

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