



Pastor's Update

Sunday, February 18, 2024

The Only Hope of the World

How can Christianity's claims to the truth be taken seriously when there are so many rival alternatives, and the world has devalued the notion of the "truth?" Irish Theologian Alister McGrath reminds us that "The Christian proclamation has always taken place in a pluralistic world, in competition with rival religious and intellectual convictions. The emergence of the gospel within the matrix of Judaism, the expansion of the church in a Hellenistic milieu, the early Christian expansion in pagan Rome, the establishment of the Mar Thoma Church in southern India – all these are examples of situations in which apologists and theologians, not to mention ordinary Christian believers, have been aware that there are [futile] alternatives to what Christianity offers. Equally, it is perfectly obvious that pluralism exists. Yet, this poses no decisive difficulties for Christianity, in theory or in practice. The ability of the gospel to transcend cultural barriers is one of its chief glories" (1)

The truth and relevance of Christianity is founded on the the presupposition that Christianity is a revealed religion. Christians believe that God disclosed Himself to His people throughout history. The ultimate revelation of God is in the Son (Heb. 1:1-3). God sent His Son into the world to restore humans to Himself. Scripture describes this experience in various terms such as salvation (Rom. 1:16), redemption (Eph. 1:7) and reconciliation (Rom 5:11). Every human being has been ruined by the Fall (Gen. 3), separated from God (Eph. 2:12) and sold into slavery to sin (Jn. 8:34; Rom. 6:16). The Christian message is that God sent His Son into the world to re-create humans. This is accomplished through the the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And this makes it possible for us to know God personally.

It is precisely at this point that the line is drawn between Christianity and all other belief systems. As McGrath reminds us, "There is a fractured relationship with God and an unfulfilled receptivity toward God within us. We are aware that some thing is missing. We may not be able to put a name on it. We may not be able to do anything about it. But the Christian gospel is able to interpret our sense of longing, our feeling of unfulfillment, as an an awareness of the absence of God, and thus prepare the way for its fulfillment. Once we realize that we are incomplete, that we lack something, then we begin to wonder if that spiritual emptiness could be filled. It is this impulse that underlies the human quest for religious fulfillment, a quest which the gospel turns upside down through its declaration that we have been sought out by the grace of God." (2)

In the words of Augustine, the great theologian and Church Father, "You have made us for Yourself, and our hearts are restless until they find rest in you." This restlessness which Augustine speaks about is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself invites "all who are weary and heavy-laden" to come to Him (Matt. 11:28).

1. A. E. McGrath, "The Christian Church's Response to Pluralism" *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 35/4 (Dec. 1992).
2. *Ibid*, 495-496.

We should always remember that the message of the gospel is not only for this present age but also for the world to come. The pluralist would have us believe that all there is to life is found in this present world. The Christian message, however, involves hope beyond the grave. The only hope for the world is Jesus Christ.

By God's Grace and for His glory,

Pr. Francis