

PK's Perspectives... A Missionary Encounter Today?

Timothy Keller is one of my “go to” bloggers. I was reading one of Tim’s blogs titled “A Missionary Encounter Today?” and I want to share an excerpt from his article with you. The context of this particular blog is the challenge of living a faithful Christian witness in the midst of a culture that marginalizes the Christian faith and the lessons we can learn from the early church that existed in similar circumstances and yet “turned the world upside down.”

...It is obvious that in western societies Christians are again seen as too exclusive and narrow, and they, too, may soon be excluded from many government, academic, and corporate careers and jobs, and be socially marginalized in various other ways. What can we learn from the early church so that we can have our own effective missionary encounter? Like the early church, we should be an alternate society with several characteristics:

(a) We should be marked by a striking multi-ethnicity. Christianity is far and away the most ethnically and culturally diverse religion in the world. This is an enormous credibility factor for Christianity. Yet the western church often does not look multi-ethnic to its culture. The public spokespersons for the church should be from as many different racial groups as possible.

(b) We should be pioneers in civility, in building bridges to those who oppose us. The earliest Christians were viciously persecuted and put to death, but the church practiced forgiveness and non-retaliation. Nowhere in the west are Christians facing this, yet many respond to even verbal criticism with like-toned disdain and attacks. Instead, Christians should be peacemakers, rather than pouring scorn on our critics and "sitting in the seat of the mockers" (Ps. 1).

(c) Like the early church, today's church should be famous for its generosity, care for the poor, and commitment to justice in society. It should be well known as the main institution working to organize poor and marginal communities to advocate for their own interests with government and business.

(d) Like the early church, we should be committed to the sanctity of life, and to being a sexual counter-culture. The church today must not merely maintain the traditional sex ethic among its own people, but it must learn to critique the false cultural narratives underlying our society's practice and view of sex.

(e) An evangelistic stance and approach. There is no evangelistic presentation that fits every culture. Every culture requires the basics of sin and salvation to be communicated in different ways. The gospel relates to other religions and world views as “subversive fulfillment” — the Gospel fulfills culture's deepest aspirations, but only by contradicting the distorted and idolatrous means the world adopts to satisfy them.

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