

January 13, 2019

TIME OF REFLECTION

“The church... is not meant to call men and women out of the world into a safe religious enclave but to call them out in order to send them back as agents of God’s kingship.”

~Lesslie Newbigin (1909-1998), British theologian and missionary

“Christianity’s success is to be found in its inclusiveness. More than any other of its [ancient] competitors it attracted all races and classes.... Christianity...gloried in its appeal to Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian...the lowly and unlettered...[and] many of the learned.... Christianity, too, was for both sexes.... The Church welcomed both rich and poor.... No other [religion]...took in so many groups and strata of society.”

~Kenneth Scott Latourette (1884-1986), historian at Yale University

“The people who heard Jesus’ disciples proclaiming the Good News were as impressed by what they saw as by what they heard. They saw lives that had been transformed—men and women who were ordinary in every way except for the fact that they seemed to have found the secret of living. They evinced a tranquility, simplicity, and cheerfulness that their hearers had nowhere else encountered.... A new quality, Christian love, was born. Conventional love is evoked by lovable qualities in the beloved, but the love people encountered from Christ embraced sinners and outcasts, Samaritans and enemies. It gave, not prudentially in order to receive, but because giving was its nature.”

~Huston Smith (1919-2016), religious studies scholar
and chair of the Philosophy Department at MIT

“This is that mystery which is rich in divine grace unto sinners: wherein by a wonderful exchange, our sins are no longer ours but Christ’s; and the righteousness of Christ is not Christ’s but ours. He has emptied himself of his righteousness that he might clothe us in it, and fill us with it: and he has taken our evils upon himself that he might deliver us from them.”

~Martin Luther (1483-1546), German reformer

“The operation of the Church is entirely set up for the sinner; which creates much misunderstanding among the smug.”

~Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964), American author

Worship through the Word

SERMON – “The Road to Philippi” – *Pastor Don Willeman*

SERMON PASSAGE – *Acts 15:1,6-12; Acts 16:1-13; Philippians 3:4b-9 (NASB)*

Acts 15

¹ Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.”...

⁶ The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. ⁷ After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; ⁹ and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are.”

¹² All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Acts 16

¹ Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, ² and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium. ³ Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. ⁴ Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. ⁵ So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

⁶ They passed through the Phrygian and

Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; ⁷ and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; ⁸ and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. ⁹ A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰ When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

¹¹ So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis; ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.

Philippians 3

⁴ ...If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵ circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.