

The Contemporary Gospel of Me

The biblical gospel starts with God and tells me what I can do to please Him. The contemporary gospel—which is really no gospel at all—starts with me and tells me what God can do to please me.

It is this fundamental difference that lies at the root of so much theological error in the church, and it is this mindset that defines our American society today. “It’s all about me!”

A 16-year-old man attending a gay pride event at Duke University in Durham, N.C., expressed this as clearly as anyone I have ever heard, explaining how he lost his faith: “I lost my religion a while ago when I was 13, because one day I was thinking about the universe and ... I can’t do what I want. Why—you know—if I want to sleep with two girls, why can’t I do that? ... Why can’t I do what I want?”

To paraphrase his thought process, which was unusually candid, “If there is a Creator to whom I am accountable, and if He has standards and rules, then I can’t do whatever I want to do; therefore, God can’t exist, because that would ruin my party.” (To watch the eye-opening, six-minute video, [click here](#).)

How remarkable. Apparently it didn’t occur to him that this could just be wishful thinking on his part, nor did it appear to dawn on him that denying the existence of God doesn’t negate the existence of God, nor did he seem to consider that there might be a good reason for God’s standards and rules.

His reasoning was quite simple—and in keeping with this generation’s mindset: Since life is all about me, and since I want to do things that this alleged God doesn’t want me to do, He’s obviously not there. Otherwise He’d be stealing my fun.

As for morality, right and wrong are defined by what I feel in my own heart, not by any external or absolute standard.

And so, when this young man was asked about homosexuality (and whether it's compatible with the Christian faith), he answered, "I mean, homosexuality ... love is love, man. You can't separate two souls that love each other."

But of course! And there's that phrase again—"Love is love"—which is as ubiquitous as it is empty. And it has become this generation's anthem for doing whatever their heart tells them to do. Why must love be attached to moral standard?

In keeping with this mindset, when the young man was asked this follow-up question, "Potentially three [people in love]?" he replied, "Yeah, to each his own."

Yes, "to each his own"—or in the language of the book of Judges, "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25, NKJV). Why? Because "there was no king in Israel."

This means that there was no absolute law, no accountability and no authoritative ruler. Spiritually speaking, it means that God was not recognized as the King of Israel and so the people were free to follow their own hearts. (Unfortunately, the pope's most recent comments to an Italian atheist play right into this mindset: "Everyone has his own idea of good and evil and must choose to follow the good and fight evil as he conceives them. That would be enough to make the world a better place.")

That's why Judges is one of the darkest books of the Bible, filled with individual sin and social anarchy. But this is what happens when we follow our own hearts. As Jeremiah proclaimed, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9).

That's why Paul described our life in the flesh before we were saved as "carrying out the desires of the body and the mind" (Eph. 2:3, ESV).

And that's why we were all under God's judgment, a subject

that is almost taboo in modern gospel circles today. After all, if we tell people they are guilty sinners deserving God's wrath, they will get turned off and not listen to our message. In fact, if we preach about God's judgment before declaring His love, the so-called "spiritual but not religious crowd" will tell us that we are preaching death, not life.

So what do many contemporary believers do today? We preach a candy-coated gospel, watering down sin, eliminating God's holiness and making the death of Jesus absolutely meaningless. After all, if we are not deserving of death and judgment, why did Jesus have to hang on the cross? Why should He die for our sins if we don't have to?

So, we make excuses for God's standards, explaining to the sinner how happy he'll be if he'll just be nice enough to ask Jesus into his heart, as if Jesus is standing out in the rain, cold and wet and rejected, hoping and wishing someone would just open the door and let Him in. That is the contemporary gospel.

There's no fear of the Lord, no warning of judgment and no denouncing of sin—just a better life *for me* if I will simply believe. And that's one reason our society is on the verge of moral collapse. It's time to get back to the gospel of Jesus!

Without a doubt, there is abundant, wonderful, glorious life in Him, but it comes as we turn from sin, deny ourselves and discover the joy of living to please Him, not to gratify ourselves.

It is then that we really live, since it's all about Him.

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