

5. The ugly truth of the Emergent Church

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If you've been coming to our church for sometime, you've heard me mentioning the Emerging Church. The Emerging Church movement is wildly popular with people who are dissatisfied with Christian orthodox doctrine, dogmatic preaching, organized church setting and traditional worship. People who are drawn to the Emerging Church generally place high value on ambiguity and mystery.

In their doctrines if they have any, everything is being questioned and deconstructed. Unlike the noble Bereans who used Scripture to test what they were taught and refine their understanding of the truth, people associated with the Emerging Church regard God's Word as too full of mystery to warrant handling any truth in a definitive way.

The result is a movement that thrives on disorganization, lends itself to mysticism, distrusts authority and dislikes preaching, feeds intellectual pride and recognizes few doctrinal or moral boundaries. It attracts thousands of people around the world.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

A. WHAT IS THE DEFINITION OF POSTMODERNISM?

People with extremely different philosophical views and ideas who distrust authority, call concepts like objective truth, the authority and inerrancy of Scripture, language and how we relate to each other into question, in what is known as postmodernism.

The ideas of postmodernism have found their way into the church at large in a movement known as the Emerging or Emergent Church.

In a nutshell, the Emergent Church movement seeks to reach the lost with the Christian Gospel by adapting it to present day culture. In other words, letting the culture come in and change the church and the Gospel message instead of letting the church drive and change the secular worldview.

B. WHO IS INTO THIS EMERGENT CHURCH?

The Emergent Church movement is made up of a widely diverse group of individuals who feel that Modernism and Evangelicalism has pretty much run its course and that in order to reach the new generation, roughly 18-35 year olds, we need to approach "church" differently.

They believe this requires that we radically reform and reshape the church's beliefs to come along side with and conform to postmodern thought and practices. These people want the idea of religion but in their own terms without judgment, wrath of God, hell and sin. They just want nice things from this unknown god without accountability, so that they can continue what they want to do.

Unfortunately, this also requires that we set aside certain core Christian beliefs and doctrines, embrace aspects of relativism and to put it bluntly, discard Christian orthodoxy in favor of a humanistic postmodern concepts.

The main leaders of the Emergent Church movement are Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones. McLaren was named as one of 25 top evangelical pastors in America.

C. UNGODLY QUOTES FROM THEIR LEADERS

"Ultimately, I hope Jesus will save Buddhism, Islam and every other religion, including the Christian religion, which often seems to need saving about as much as any other religion does." – Brian McLaren

"Our message and methodology have changed, do change, and must change if we are faithful to the ongoing and unchanging mission of Jesus Christ." – Brian McLaren

"The old paradigm taught that if you had the right teaching, you will experience God. The new paradigm says that if you experience God, you will have the right teaching." – Dan Kimball

"A lot of arguments happen among religious and non religious people about the question of who's going to hell and who's going to heaven and uh, a lot of times Christians get into this argument by saying 'we have the only way to heaven.' And uh, people often ask me what do I think is the way to heaven. I have a problem when they ask me this question because it assumes that the primary purpose of Jesus' coming and the primary message of Jesus was a message about how to get to heaven." – Brian McLaren

"God has an incredibly high view of people. God believes that people are capable of amazing things. I have been told that I need to believe in Jesus. Which is a good thing. But what I am learning is that Jesus believes in me. I have been told that I need to have faith in God. Which is a good thing. But what I am learning is that God has faith in me." – Rob Bell (Velvet Elvis, p. 134)

"Stop looking for some objective Truth that is available when we delve into the text of the Bible." – Tony Jones

"What we know means nothing. What we live means everything." – Barry Taylor (from a talk at Capo Beach Calvary). Contrast this with John 8:32

"The church has been preoccupied with the question, "What happens to your soul after you die?" As if the reason for Jesus coming can be summed up in, "Jesus is trying to help get more souls into heaven, as opposed to hell, after they die." I just think a fair reading of the Gospels blows that out of the water. I don't think that the entire message and life of Jesus can be boiled down to that bottom line." – Brian McLaren

"Emergent doesn't have a position on absolute truth, or on anything for that matter. Do you show up at a dinner party with your neighbors and ask, 'What's this dinner party's position on absolute truth?' No, you don't, because it's a non-sensical question." – Tony Jones

These are sad and pathetic comments by the main leaders in the Emergent Church movement.

True, there are certain Scriptures that are not always self-evident and some are hard to understand. That's why God gives teachers to His church and the reason why He gave the illuminating ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Whether they like to admit it or not, God has given us enough information to know Him on a personal level, and He has given us enough information to realize that Jesus died on the cross as a substitute for sinners, taking the full brunt of our sins, and that His death was an atoning sacrifice on behalf of believers.

D. THE TEACHINGS OF THE EMERGENT CHURCH

1. The belief that the Bible is no longer considered the ultimate and final authority as to the basis of the Christian faith.

The Emergent Church insist that truth is not absolute, but it is relative. However, truth is reality as it corresponds to the way things really are. Absolute truth is absolute no matter where you are, no matter in what time you live.

The bottom line is that to deny that there is absolute and moral truth is to deny God. To deny that we can know absolute and moral truth is to deny that we can know God.

McLaren said, "The problem with the critics [conservative Evangelicals] here is that they think they have a superior, timeless Gospel that floats above any culture..." He added, "I don't think we've got the Gospel right yet.... I don't think the liberals have it right. But I don't think we have it right either. None of us has arrived at orthodoxy."

Rob Bell who is the pastor of Mars Hill in Grand Rapids, MI said, "One of the lies is that truth only resides in this particular community or that particular thought system," Bell says. "I affirm the truth anywhere in any religious system, in any worldview. If it's true, it belongs to God."

What does the Bible tell us about the people like this?

1 Timothy 6:5 useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

Galatians 1:6-9 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

Romans 3:4 Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: "That You may be justified in Your words, And may overcome when You are judged."

2. Teaching that Jesus is not the only way in which a person might be saved. They believe that Christianity should validate of other world religions. They believe that other religions also lead to the same God.

The Emergent Church leaders believe that the salvation from God allows not only those who believe in Jesus and follow Him, but also everybody including different religions, animals and all of God's creations. What they believe is known as 'Universalism'.

The Bible rules out the possibility that all people will be saved.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

You as born-again Christians may wonder why and how in the world people believe this garbage doctrine? To you and me it is a mute point, because we believe in the absolute truth of God and we don't question it.

But think about what I said in last Thursday night teaching:

"The majority of people would like to have a sense of security of religion, but in their own ways so that they don't have to change their ungodly lifestyles. To make this happen, they have to redefine God's standard righteousness and grace. To them, grace is twisted to mean freedom to do as one pleases."

What they have for the people who want their itching ears being tickled is One-size-fits-all-religion.

3. Allowing the secular culture to drive Christianity and the Gospel message in order to reach a postmodern generation

Another hallmark of the postmodernism influence on the Emerging Church movement is that of reaching the lost with the Christian Gospel by adapting it to the present day culture.

They believe that the world is radically changing and the church must change in order to keep pace with the world.

We should not adjust the Bible to the age or culture, but by God's grace, we shall adjust the age and culture to the Bible.

I believe that fresh approaches to younger generation with the same authentic Gospel of Jesus Christ is very much needed, but not with a different message.

Rob Bell said, "I do not mean cosmetic, superficial changes like better lights and music, sharper graphics, and new methods with easy-to-follow steps. I mean theology: the believes about God, Jesus, the Bible, Salvation and the future." from Velvet Elvis page 12

How pathetically he is duped by satan!

Ephesians 4:14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

The message of Christianity is fixed. It is unchanging. The canon of Scripture closed with the completion of the Book of Revelation in approximately AD 95 and since then, God's Word has been unalterable.

We are to proclaim His Word and teachings, not edit them however we like.

4. The coming judgment and hell

Many of the Emergent Church leaders are watering down or flat out denying the Bible's teaching on a coming judgment and the everlasting suffering of the unrighteous in hell.

Regarding after death of those who denied the salvation through Jesus Christ, Doug Pagitt claimed:

"God is going to judge the life and repair, and restore and heal the life of everybody in the same way."

Pagitt is a sorry excuse pastor.

5. Condoning of the homosexual lifestyle

I don't think I need to go over this subject again since we studied in-depth in Romans 1:26-32 regarding the perversion of homosexual life style. The Bible makes it clear that homosexual acts are sinful in the sight of the Lord without any question from both the OT and NT. Yet the Emergent Church people do not see a problem with it.

1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

According to Doug Pagitt, he said, "No, being gay and Christian is not a contradiction in any way." You have to wonder what kind of Bible he reads.

E. UNBIBLICAL SPIRITUAL PRACTICES THEY DO

The Emergent Church people were encouraged to do these following unbiblical spiritual practices to reach God:

- Contemplative prayer
- Liturgies
- Prayer Beads
- Prayer Labyrinths
- Icons
- Chants/Mantras
- Candles
- Crosses
- Incense
- Yoga
- Eastern type meditative practices (New Age)

What is contemplative prayer? It is a meditative practice where a person focuses on a word and repeats that word over and over for the duration of the exercise. What does Jesus say about this?

Matthew 6:7-8 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.

F. CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit speaks to us through apostle John in 1 John 2:15.

1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Be careful what you hear and what you read. The devil is very good in disguising himself as an angel of the light. Just because someone you know as a Christian or a good person recommends that you read something, it does not mean that it is something that will help your Christian life.

Put everything against the Word of God in context.

The church should not absorb or mimic the current secular culture because friendship with the world is enmity with God and that we should not be carried about with every wind of doctrine but we should be world changers being ready in and out of season to do the work of God.