
Renew: Returning the Heartbeat of Hope

“Renewing Good News”

Hebrews 1: 1-4 and 2: 1-4

Thoughts to Shape and Spark Discussion:

“It is high time that Christians should rediscover that the very heart of their faith is that Jesus Christ did not come to make a contribution to the religious storehouse of mankind, but that in him God reconciled the world unto himself.” - Dr. W.A. Visser’t Hooft, first General Secretary to the World Council of Churches.

“Jesus is not ‘the Great’; he is the only. He has no peers, no rivals, and no successors.” - John Stott

“I am grateful for Shinto, for Buddhism, and for Confucianism. I owe much to these faiths . . . Yet these three faiths utterly failed to minister to my heart’s deepest needs. I was a pilgrim journeying upon a long road that had no turning. I was weary. I was footsore. I wandered through a dark and dismal world where tragedies were thick . . . Buddhism teaches great compassion . . ., but since the beginning of time, who has declared, “this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many unto the remission of sins”?” - Toyohiko Kagawa

“The people who hanged Christ never, to do them justice, accused him of being a bore - on the contrary, they thought him too dynamic to be safe. It has been left for later generations to muffle up that shattering personality and surround him with an atmosphere of tedium. We have efficiently pared the claws of the Lion of Judah, certified him “meek and mild” and recommended him as a fitting household pet for pale curates and pious old ladies.” - Dorothy Sayers

Themes and Questions to Guide Reflection and Response:

- What from the Scripture passage or the sermon made an impression upon you? Are there lingering questions to be answered or rabbit trails to be followed for you?
- The sermon opened with the honest confession of one woman’s reaction to Jesus and Christians’ excitement about Jesus. She asked, “What’s the big deal about Jesus?”
 - How did her story resonate with you?
 - When do you find yourself asking, “What’s the big deal about Jesus?”
 - How do you answer that question for yourself? For others? For those outside the faith?
- Hebrews 2 exhorts believers to pay much closer attention to what we have heard and believed so that we don’t “neglect such a great salvation”.
 - Where have you found yourself drifting, dulling, hardening, assuming with respect to the greatness of “salvation”?
 - How does this happen?
 - What would you like to be renewed for you? For our church? For the larger culture’s understanding of the Gospel?
 - What do you think Dorothy Sayers means that we have “pared the claws of the Lion of Judah”?
- What do you make of the uniqueness of Jesus Christ - his being Lord, Savior, and Ours?
 - How do the quotations from Hooft, Stott, and Kagawa inform and push you?
 - Why should we not present the Bible as just another “book of religion”?
 - Where do you feel the pressure to soften the claims of Jesus personally as well as culturally? When is it tempting and convenient to speak of Jesus as “the Great” and not “the only”?
 - What are the cost and consequences of not softening that truth?
 - What are the costs and consequences of taking the edge off of the unique claims of Christ?