

Christian Faith in Britain – The way ahead?

Last month I expressed my misgivings of secularism and suggested that our nation is facing a number of social, economic and political difficulties as a result of our lack of reference to God. If the issues that lie ahead and indeed those already facing our country have a spiritual root then the solution lies not with secular politics but with the Church. This doesn't mean that I believe the Church has got it right and everyone else is wrong. It is the responsibility of the Church to help others find their relationship with God through Jesus. In this, the current model of Church is clearly failing. I therefore believe that it is now time for the Church on a national scale to come together in humility, genuine repentance and intercession on behalf of the nation. The way forward is I think laid out in the following Old Testament passage:

2 Chron 7:13-14 'When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, if my people who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.'

Taking these verses phrase by phrase the actions for our times perhaps begins to emerge.

If my people who are called by my name – The responsibility for the land lies with the people who truly believe in, and aim to follow God.

Humble themselves – The first thing required of the Church is to have the humility to ask serious questions of our current practices. Jesus tells us that He is Lord but is this really evident in our churches? Being essentially good citizens, regular church goers or even working to the point of exhaustion for the Church organization does not necessarily mean that we are living authentic Christian lives. Do we have the humility to at least consider the possibility that many of our current Church activities could be futile in the larger scheme of things and that we waste considerable energy and resources pursuing them. We also need humility to acknowledge our absolute dependence on God. We can be encouraged here by initiatives birthed in focused prayer that have already brought about what we may later see as the first shoots of revival. We must act in His power and not our own.

And pray – In humility we acknowledge that the solution lies with God. Involving God in the issues of the world takes place in prayer; in bringing our situation before him, asking for his mercy, help and empowerment.

And seek my face – As we acknowledge all these things so will we be drawn back to our first priority; an intimate relationship with God. Rev 2:4-5 is I think relevant to the Church in these times: Yet I hold this against you. You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen. Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent I will come to you and remove your lamp stand from its place. Love in personal relationships is about both enjoying the presence of the one you love and living not simply for yourself but for the good of that other person. As Christians we have to ask ourselves how much time we spend alone in God's presence and whether or not we genuinely aim to deny our interests for His.

And turn from their wicked ways – We may have to face up to the fact that some of what we do in the name of God is in fact sinful. We can take on many good deeds, but are they the things that God is calling us to take on? If not then we must conclude that we are acting in

disobedience to God. The Church has to accept some responsibility for the gap that has grown between it and the surrounding culture. It is very possible that our desire to keep Church as we like it rather than respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit has moved people away from Jesus. Turning from these ways (repentance) is not just acknowledgement or even being sorry but changing our actions and behaviours.

I will hear from heaven and heal their land – As Christians take the steps above God promises to hear and heal. The healing is not just for the Church but the very land on which we live and all those in it.

Conclusion

‘ Seek the Lord while He is near, call on Him while he may be found ’ (I saiah 55:6) . I believe that in these days God is near and he can be found and is already drawing many to him in prayer. It is time I believe for others to join this movement, to seek the Lord on behalf of our land.

Steve