



Keys to Practicing Our Faith

If God's Word Must Be Our Text
Then God's World Must Be Our Context

God's World: Not Our World As It Was a Century Ago

- ◆ Life expectancy – 47 years
- ◆ Homes with bathtubs (14%); phones (8%)
- ◆ 8,000 cars; 144 miles of paved roads
- ◆ Average annual worker wage - \$200-\$400
- ◆ Average for professionals - \$1,500-\$5,000
- ◆ Two of every 10 adults could not read or write.
- ◆ Total number of high school graduates - 6%
- ◆ Doctors w/o college education – 90%
- ◆ Most “medical schools” considered sub-standard
- ◆ 95% of all births were at home



Want to Go Back to 1907?

- ◆ Sugar cost 4 cents a pound
- ◆ Eggs were 14 cents a dozen
- ◆ Coffee available at 15 cents a pound
- ◆ Five leading causes of death were:
pneumonia and influenza, tuberculosis,
diarrhea, heart disease, and stroke.
- ◆ Reported murders in entire county – 230
- ◆ Most women washed their hair once a
month – with Borax or egg yoke shampoo
- ◆ Marijuana, heroin, and morphine were all
available over-the-counter





God's World: Not Our World Then

- ◆ Geographically – massive migrations westward
- ◆ Religiously – only a decade or so away from the Fundamentalist/Modernist upheavals
- ◆ Culturally – fairly isolationist, pre-WWI and WWII
- ◆ Socially – segregationist
- ◆ Technologically – in infancy

God's World: Not Even Our World Now

- ◆ Geographically - one world, inside and outside our shores, “flat” -- interwoven and co-dependent
- ◆ Religiously – increasingly multiform, often feeding radical, protectionist ideologies.
- ◆ Culturally – more and more secular, driven by the search for power, security, wealth, and influence
- ◆ Socially – disruptive, impersonal, fragmented, with diminishing “I-Thou” dialogue and increasing “We-They” tensions
- ◆ Technologically – fueled by exponential change, fast-paced obsolescence, and virtually instant communication and gratification.





Ever Feel Nervous and Peevish? You're Not Alone:

"The children now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and tyrannize their teachers."

Attributed to SOCRATES by Plato, according to William L. Patty and Louise S. Johnson, *Personality and Adjustment*, p. 277 (1953).



Look for God's World Within and Beyond Your Own

◆ Joseph Sittler has a wise word:

“The malleability of all things, the pathos of time’s passingness, the forward-looking, irrecoverable nature of time—this is a theme central to the human reality. The gospel speaks from within and to mortality and passingness, and for that reason a sense of time as both irrecoverable and promising characterizes the deepest wisdom. The nervous, jerky, digital watch would, I think, have been offensive to the writer of Psalm 90: ‘So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.’”

from *Gravity and Grace*, p.97



‘Passingness’ and ‘Promise’

- ◆ Where and how is God at work in his world?
- ◆ Are you looking for help too close at hand? (Psalm 121:1,2).
- ◆ Think large, not small—”theo-logically.”
- ◆ What is God’s logic above, behind, and beyond all that is happening in his creation and world?
- ◆ What is only “passingness” in us, i.e., chaff that the winds of time will blow away?
- ◆ And what, as evidence of God at work, is “promise”—his seed, planted in us, that he has said will bear fruit for him in due season?



“Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness....”

Philippians 2:5-7a



“...Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

Philippians 4:8b



How Shall We Think God's Thoughts in God's World?

- ◆ Geo-graphically and geo-politically?

‘The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof’ (Ps 24:1)

- ◆ Geo-religiously?

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5)

- ◆ Geo-culturally?

‘Be imitators of God, as beloved children’ (Eph 5:1)

- ◆ Geo-socially?

“Christ...has broken down the...hostility between us” (Eph 2:14)

- ◆ Geo-technologically?

“I have become all things to all people,
that I might by all means save some” (1 Cor 9:22)

Be Realistic!

“For he [Abraham] looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.”
Hebrews 11:10

- ◆ “We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:18
- ◆ “Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.” (Heb 12:12,13)



Our Hope Is in God!



A contemporary hymn
by Brian Wren
(the last in our hymnal)
lifts up that hope
and places the reality of it
firmly in perspective:

When All Is Ended

When all is ended, time and troubles past,
shall all be mended, sin and death outcast?
In hope we sing, and hope to sing at last:
Alleluia! Alleluia!

As in the night, when lightning flickers free,
and gives a glimpse of distant hill and tree,
each flash of good discloses what will be:
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Against all hope, our weary times have known
wars ended, peace declared, compassion shown,
great days of freedom, tyrants overthrown:
Alleluia! Alleluia!

Then do not cheat the poor, who long for bread,
with dream-worlds in the sky or in the head,
but sing of slaves set free, and children fed:
Alleluia! Alleluia!

With earthy faith we sing a song of heaven:
all life fulfilled, all loved, all wrong forgiven.
Christ is our sign of hope, for Christ is risen:
Alleluia! Alleluia!

With all creation, pain and anger past,
evil exhausted, love supreme at last,
alive in God, we'll sing an unsurpassed
Alleluia! Alleluia!





Assignment for Session Three

- ◆ Read Romans 12 in your Bible several times. After doing so, read it also in other versions. Lastly read it in the handout from Eugene Peterson's paraphrase in *The Message*.
- ◆ Commit yourself to whatever you feel led do in obedience to God's call this week. Pray for his Spirit to guide you in proceeding, and to provide whatever encouragement and resource you may need.
- ◆ Food for Your Thought: "The only way in which we can grow into something better than we are is to do things we are not strictly able to do." Miller, p. 17