



Is The Church Still Relevant?

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Posted online by A New You Ministry
www.anym.org**

The word "relevant," has crept into our religious vocabulary. What does it really mean? A thing is said to be relevant when it fits or suits given requirements, when it is pertinent and applicable, when it has something worthwhile to say in a given situation at a given place and time.

Many today say that the Church is no longer relevant in our modern world. It may have been alright in its day, but today we know so many more things that we didn't know then. This, according to their claim, makes the Church obsolete. Critics have made statements like this one: "Five out of every six church buildings in North America could be sold and dismantled without damage to the Christian mission."

Even in our seminaries you can hear vocal critics that the Church is not relevant! Many young students are critical of the church, critical of the Spirit of Prophecy, critical of Church doctrines and the list goes on! This cynical criticism by those preparing to serve it, to be it's representatives, is indeed alarming! Is the Church's Mission in doubt? Has the Church's mission become a political viewpoint? Has the main thrust of the Church switched from spiritual to secular? Has the Church's focus stayed true to the reformation of the individual or has the focus been the restoration of society?

But when we now speak of the work of the Church, the assignment that Christ has given it, its message, its mission of God, - here the directive of our Lord is crystal clear! We now ask the question, "Is the Church still relevant in the modern world?" Is the mission and message of the Church as

entrusted to it by Christ still relevant in the modern world? Does it still fit man's requirements as they exist today? Is it still pertinent and applicable? Does it still have something worthwhile to say at this particular time and place in the history of mankind?

Review of the Scripture's Teachings on the Real Mission and Method of the Church Let's review briefly what the Scriptures teach concerning the mission and message of the Church. Matthew summarizes that assignment very clearly and very simply when he writes in the closing chapter of his Gospel, "Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." (Matt. 28:16-20).

Luke concurs when he writes in the opening chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, " 4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. 6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:4-8).

Who can disregard the Savior's eloquent witness before Pilate, "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." (John 18:36). And that assignment, that message, that mission has not changed, not even in the 21st century. The Church is still the temple of God, the Body of Christ, made up of those who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, who believe that Jesus died for their sins and rose again for their justification and ultimately for their glorification. The Church does not belong to man, but to Christ. It is His possession, called to serve Him and to fulfill His purposes. To this Church God has assigned the responsibility of calling sinners to repentance, of proclaiming forgiveness through the cross of Christ, of encouraging individual believers in their Christian living. The purpose is to lead the elect of God through faith in Christ unto eternal salvation. And the only means God has given to the Church to carry out its assigned purpose is His Word as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Only by preaching the Law and the Gospel, sin and grace, the wrath of God against sin and the mercy of God in Christ, will men be converted and made wise unto salvation.

As soon as the Church deviates from that assignment, from that message, from that mission, it will cease to be relevant, for it will no longer meet the basic needs of man in today's society . It will no longer be relevant when it fails to fulfill Christ's purposes, as when, for example, it becomes an agency for the defense of unbelief, when it denies the doctrines of the Christian faith such as the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, the Godhead, and justification by faith. It will no longer be relevant when it joins forces with social revolution, when it condones sexual immorality, and champions lawlessness, when it becomes skeptical of the power of the Gospel to reform the individual and then attempts vainly to transform man by seeking to improve his environment.

The opposite of "relevant" is "obsolete", gone out of use, no longer serving any real function or purpose. We could very aptly refer to the Church as obsolete when she forgets her God-given mission and begins to dabble in all sorts of things which, as a Church, are not her concern. It is somewhat ironical that those who are most radical in their judgments of the biblical Church and who are pioneers in attempting to involve the Church' in those matters which are none of her business, that these usually fail to realize that they themselves are the ones who are making the Church seem irrelevant and unnecessary.

The Apostle Paul described them well, however, when he wrote to Timothy: "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. 2 For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, 4 Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; 5 Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away." (2 Tim. 3:1-5)

The Church which Remains True to her God-given Mission will Always be Relevant .But let us now see that the Church which remains true to her God-given message and mission, that proclaims Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world, that bears witness to man's sin and God's grace, that Church will always be relevant. It will have something pertinent to say to the needs of 21st century men and women, in fact, it alone can provide him with that which he perhaps needs more desperately than ever before.

The world which the Church is serving today is more educated - it knows more about more things than in any preceding era in the history of the Church and the world. Almost all of that education and training is being imparted in an atmosphere that suggests a lot of questions, but provides very few answers; an atmosphere in which there is a great deal of searching, but very little finding; an atmosphere in which the theories and assumptions and accepted facts of this moment may already be outmoded because of a new discovery that will be announced tomorrow; an atmosphere that lends itself very well to the question, "What is truth"? and thereby subtly suggesting that there are no absolute standards anymore, no fixed truths, no final authorities, that there is, in fact, no last word that can be spoken on anything.

And yet, the Christian message - the one that God has laid upon our conscience to share also with the modern world -this Christian message insists that there are areas of learning and wisdom and knowledge in which there are absolutes, in which there are fixed truths, in which there is a final authority and concerning which a last word can indeed be spoken. The Christian message insists that there is an ultimate in wisdom and knowledge, a knowledge beyond which there simply is no other, a knowledge that is not susceptible of further analysis, a knowledge that is fundamental and essential, a knowledge that is final, a knowledge that is indeed the last word on the subject so that there's nothing more to say.

The Scriptures tell us just that when Paul writes to the Colossians, "In Him (that is, in Christ) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge". (Col. 2:3) "Christ is the center of the circle," Luther used to say, "and all the narratives of Holy Writ, if they be rightly viewed, will point to Christ." "And if I do not find Christ in my study, then my study has been in vain. For without His help all my labor is ineffectual, without His grace all wisdom is folly.". In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge - not a few, not some, not most, but all of them. There is no knowledge and wisdom of any kind worth having, apart from Christ. For the wisdom in Christ does more than suggest questions. It gives answers, answers where they really count.

At this point I would like to share a little story with you, one that I read somewhere a few years ago, but one that's always stayed with me. It concerns a young man who had just been graduated from one of the nation's leading law schools. Very much thrilled at the prospect of beginning his career after many years of hard work and study, he was sharing some of his excitement and enthusiasm with a next-door neighbor, a longtime friend of the family.

"I've finally made it," he said. "I have a job with a leading law firm in the East. I begin working the first of July. Incidentally, I'll be one of the highest paid members of my class." "I'm happy for you," the old neighbor replied, "I know that you always worked hard in school. I'm sure that you will now work equally hard in the legal profession. But what then?" "I expect to gain some valuable experience with this firm," the young man continued. "My name will become known, and before long I'll be able to branch out on my own."

"And then?" his neighbor continued. "Then I'm going to get married, raise a family, and with my income I'll certainly be able to give them many of the advantages I did not have." "And then?" "Well, the way I have it figured, I'll be able to retire at an early age. Then my wife and I will travel and do all the things we were too busy to do before." "And then?"

"Well, I don't suppose I can expect to live forever. I suppose eventually, like every one else, I'll have to die". "And then?"

And for the first time in this animated, somewhat one-sided conversation the brash young man with all the answers was suddenly quiet. For this question, the one that really mattered, he had no answer. A brilliant mind, with a vast store of every imaginable kind of knowledge, but the wisdom he had acquired did not pass the acid test when he was suddenly confronted with life's most vital question. "What's my hope, in what do I place my trust, what do I hang onto when I come to the end of the road, in that inevitable moment when God taps me on the shoulder and whispers, "Time's up!" And unless I have the answer to that question I haven't gotten past the ABC's and my degree isn't worth the paper it's written on.

Therefore, I submit that the Christian message is indeed relevant to modern man, because it gives him an answer in that inescapable moment when he needs it most, when suddenly all his know-how and the vast estate he has accumulated doesn't help him in the least because he's about to be placed in a box without pockets. But the Christian message gives him an answer to that all-important question, "What must I do to be saved?", an answer that is the final authority, an answer that is the last word, for it comes from the lips of our omniscient Lord who has said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"(John 14:6).

So what about the restless youth whose thought of dying is the farthest thing from his mind - He has a life to live first and he's anxious to get on with it. So what he wants to know is this: What can Christ do for me right here and now as I move through this world? Again, the answer has to be "Everything!" In fact, it's the only wisdom that will make our lives successful and meaningful, abundant and triumphant right here and now. For only in Christ do we begin to realize that we're not blind creatures of fate, that our lives are not ruled by chance, that we're not just a little, insignificant fly on a dizzy universe, that we're not just helpless pawns on the world's giant chessboard moved about at will to satisfy the whims of a fickle deity. No, only in Christ do we realize that we're a prized possession of God. We must be! For think of what He paid to make us His own. Silver, perhaps, gold? Nothing that cheap. The lifeblood of His Son. That's what He paid to redeem us. That's how much we're worth to Him.

And if He thinks that much of us, nothing, but nothing can really go wrong in our lives. We are here reminded of the Apostle Paul's triumphant declaration in Romans Chapter 8: "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8:31,32). Admittedly, there are many details in our personal and individual lives whose meaning and purpose may not immediately be clear to us. But there is one fact that we always know beyond all possibility of doubt. Above us, reigning in heaven, is a God who is for us. This is not some vague, non-descript deity, but a God of love. Not just a God of love in general, but a God Who demonstrated His love for us in a very tangible way, in a way that we can all understand, when He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all.

The logic of Holy Scripture is simply this - and you can't argue with it. If God has given us the Gift, surely He will also let us have the ribbons. If God has given His Son to die for us, to ransom us from the powers of Sin and Death, and to win us back to eternal fellowship with Him, then surely He will also find a way for us to surmount the minor tragedies of life. If He has done the greater thing, surely He will also do the lesser. We are not dealing here with some theological abstraction, but with a truth which has a vital bearing on the life of every man and every woman every hour of every day. To go through life without the assurance of God's love would be nothing but a ghastly nightmare. Who would want to get up in the morning and go to work, not knowing how God felt toward Him, not knowing if God in His holiness and righteousness had thrown him off forever? Who would want to slave at the office or sweat at the work bench or ironing board, or who would want to go to bed one more night, not knowing if God is a hateful monster or a merciful and loving Heavenly Father?

I found this quote tucked away in my files - Author Unknown... "The Cross of Christ is the only basis, the only sure foundation of Christian hope. Indeed, it is the only ground for prevailing hope that God has given to man. For it is only in the cross of Christ that man can finally become convinced of God's mercy and His love. Where else can man turn for an authentic revelation of His love? The towering mountains and the billowing seas may tell us of His power. The sun and the moon and the rolling canopy of heaven may tell us of His wisdom. The test tube and the microscope may tell us of the marvelous secrets which He has tucked away in His material universe. But nowhere can we find incontrovertible evidence of His love - except in His own self-revelation through the Cross. It is there that we learn what God thinks of us, how He feels toward us, and what His intentions with us are."

The Church, then, which is true to her God-given mission and message not only provides a sure answer to life's most vital question, "What must I do to be saved?", but it also provides the wisdom which alone can give rhyme and reason to the events of man's life right here and now. The Church which is true to her God-given mission can give an answer to the men and women in the world who are searching for the meaning and purpose of their lives. It can give them an answer which is the ultimate, the last word. That answer is found in Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The Church which faithfully proclaims Christ as the Son of God and the Savior of the world will be relevant also in our modern world. For amid the rapidly changing scenes of life it will assure 21st century man that there are still some absolute values that never change. It will let him hear a voice that does not merely test theories, explore possibilities - and thereby undermine faith and create doubt. But it will let him hear a voice which in the areas that really count, does not have to say, "I think" or "maybe you're right" or "It seems to me" or "Who cares" or "What difference does it make?" But it will be a voice that speaks with authority and sureness, because it can back up everything that it says with "Thus saith the Lord."

Reasons why we can be sure that the Church is Relevant Today:

Sinful Man does not Change nor does our Merciful God

But there is also very plausible and logical proof for the statement that the Church which remains true to her God-given message and mission is relevant in the modern world, just as relevant as it was on the day that Christ entrusted that message to His Church, just as relevant as it was on the day over 400 years ago when Martin Luther fastened 95 Theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg. And it will still be equally relevant on the day that our risen and ascended Lord returns in glory. The reason why we can make such a positive assertion is that it rests upon two basic premises, both of which are Scriptural. The first is that sinful man, left to himself and his own devices, does not change. And this could be terribly frustrating and depressing if it were not for the second basic premise, as true as it is Scriptural. This is the fact that a merciful and a gracious God does not change.

Let's begin with the first: Sinful man, left to himself and his own devices, does not change. The world, the modern world in which you and I dwell, is living proof. Anyone who has eyes to see certainly has ample opportunity to observe sinful and sin-blinded man in action. . We observe sinful man in action in the increasing moral decay just in that area where the breakdown takes its deadly toll most quickly - that of the home and the family. We observe sinful man in action in a society that gets its kicks in the weirdest and most morbid fashion. And anyone of us could augment this list considerably. But the most alarming feature about all this is that we're fast becoming accustomed to it. We're beginning to accept these things as normal, natural human behavior. It's being defended, approved, sanctioned - even in places where one might dare to hope for better things.

We are reminded that we must be careful not to violate or deprive anyone of his basic human and constitutional rights. As a result of our permissiveness, we're fast approaching a way of life in which we're concerned about the rights of everyone except those of the decent, honest, upright, moral, hard-working, law-abiding citizen. No one seems to care. Shock us? It should! But surprise us? Not really? Do we actually have the right to expect anything better from man who long ago preferred the Tempter's voice to the voice of God? Do we have the right to expect anything better from a world in which the creature has consistently professed to be wiser than His Creator? Of course not! Didn't our God say long ago, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9)

Permit me to read to you Paul's description of sinful man, left to himself and his own devices. Romans 3:10-19.

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:

11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.

12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:

14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:

15 Their feet are swift to shed blood:

16 Destruction and misery are in their ways:

17 And the way of peace have they not known:

18 There is no fear of God before their eyes.

19 Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that

every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Would anyone want to say that this is not a relevant analysis of modern man? Why, it could have been an editorial taken from this morning's newspaper commenting on something that happened in our modern world last night. Paul also summarizes it this way: "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for There is no difference: for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:22,23). Natural man is not neutral at birth, as some would have us believe, so that his future development supposedly depends entirely on his subsequent environment. No, man is by birth and nature an enemy of God, inclined only to that which is evil. He is not even aware of his sorry plight, because he is spiritually blind. And even if he were aware of it, he would be powerless to do anything about it because he is dead in trespasses and sin.

No, sinful man has not changed. Left to himself, he is still the same selfish, self-centered individual that he has always been ever since the Fall. This makes the Christian message highly relevant. It does not presume to be able to change him by spending vast sums of money to alter his environment. It starts at the right place. It speaks to his foremost need. It goes directly to the heart of the matter by addressing itself to his heart, that heart which God describes as deceitful and desperately wicked. Pointing the sinner to the time-tested, infallible, highly-relevant Word of an unchangeable God - that man must be taught to say, first of all, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." And only the Christian message has the power to lead him to say that.

We have just made reference to an unchangeable God. And this is what saves us from despair. This is what renews our strength, our courage, our hope. This, above all else, makes the Christian message highly relevant - the fact that our gracious and merciful God never changes.

I made a reference to Martin Luther. An attempt to correct a specific abuse within the Church caused Martin Luther, to post his 95 Theses on October 31, 1517. That specific abuse was the sale of indulgences which offered certain spiritual and heavenly blessings in exchange for some earthly consideration, for something that man does, for something that a human offers God in place of true repentance and faith. An indulgence was a draft on the bank of heaven to pay for human sin. It was based on the underlying theory that Jesus and the saints had accumulated a surplus treasury of merits. Guilty sinners who were in arrears could drag on the treasury - for a price, of course. The early and more moderate view was that an indulgence could remit only the punishment for sin which the Church had imposed. But in time a more extreme view developed which held that an indulgence could not only remit the penalties of the Church, but could actually forgive sin. And it was this specific abuse which provoked Luther's protest of 1517.

He said in part: "Our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, in saying, 'Repent ye' intended that the whole life of His believers should be repentance. Every Christian who truly repents of his sin has complete remission of all pain and guilt, and it is his without any letters of pardon. The true treasure of the Church is the holy Gospel of the glory and grace of God." Through His Word the Holy Spirit had led Luther to see the glory and grace of God, to see that gracious God who never changes. For God, who first promised fallen man a Savior in Eden, has made good on His promise. That Savior has appeared in the person of God's own Son, Christ Jesus, and has redeemed man with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death. The payment of this ransom, which fully satisfied the demands of divine justice, enables God to justify, to declare the guilty sinner righteous without any letters of pardon purchased with earthly coinage. It is his by faith.

To illustrate the manner in which God forgives, to illustrate the fact that God does not change, that He is indeed the same gracious, merciful God - yesterday, today, tomorrow and forever - I like the analogy of the compassionate physician whose widow was going through some of his personal effects one day when she happened to find a number of statements for professional services, fully itemized. But at the bottom of each of them the good doctor had written, "Forgiven, too poor to pay." His widow, who had never quite approved the generosity of her late husband, even went to court in an attempt to collect them. The various itemized statements were introduced as evidence of an unpaid debt. The judge examined them carefully and asked, "Is this the handwriting and the signature of your late husband?" She testified that it was. "Then, my good lady, the judge continued, "there isn't a court in the land that has the right to collect them. For the man to whom they were owed has marked them, 'Paid in full'". This is what God has written under the staggering debt of human sin and guilt that you and I owed Him, "Forgiven, too poor to pay." And there isn't a soul in heaven or earth or hell itself that will ever dare to charge against us what God has forgiven us once and for all in Christ. For the gracious, never-changing God to whom our debt was owed has marked it "Paid in full." And this declaration of God's unmerited grace in Christ is a part of that infallible record of which a changeless God has said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

Man desires freedom. But you and I know that there is no true freedom apart from Christ. You can put every man in a mansion, but without Christ he will still be a slave. The angry young man, the rebel and the non-conformist are not really free. They keep on searching, but that elusive goal of inner peace and freedom is always gone before they get there. The reason, of course, is that true peace and freedom comes only to those who accept the invitation of Jesus to put on His yoke, a yoke that He promises is easy and not burdensome. Perhaps even you and I forget at times that the Christian message is not only a way of faith; it is also a way of life. Something happens to the man who really understands what forgiveness through Christ means. He becomes a new creature. In Him God performs a heart transplant of the highest order. God gives him a new life, a new purpose, a new incentive for living, a new power to live by, new tastes, new appetites, new everything.

Let's hear from an authority on the subject, Paul, writing to the Philippians: Phil. 3:7-14 - " 7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, 9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: 10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; 11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. 12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, 14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 3:7-14).

How changed were his ambitions? You almost forget that this is the same man who once found his greatest delight in persecuting and killing Christians. But now he was a new creature, a man with a new allegiance. Now he was no longer a servant of sin, but a servant of God. And this was a willing and a joyful service. Here was a man who could truthfully sing, "Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, I'm free at last." And he was living the new life in Christ, not because he felt that he had to, but because he wanted to: The love of Christ constrained him. During the early days of the past century a wealthy plantation owner in the South was attracted by the heart-rending sobs of a young slave girl who was

about to step up to the auction block. Moved by a momentary impulse of generosity he bought her at a very high price and then disappeared mysteriously into the crowd that thronged the marketplace. When the auction was over, the clerk came to the sobbing girl and handed her the bill of sale. But to her amazement on that piece of paper, which normally would have delivered her to her purchaser as his rightful possession, he had written a little four-letter word: F R E E - Free? At first she stood there stunned and speechless as one by one the other slaves were claimed by their owners and led away. What kind of a cruel hoax was this? When the impact of that word finally got through to her, when she finally realized what it really meant, she threw herself at the feet of the clerk and pleaded, "Where is the man that bought me? Please, you've got to help me find him. This man has set me free. I must serve him the rest of my life."

And you and I can only echo: "Christ has set me free. I must serve Him the rest of my life." This freedom in Christ now becomes the motivating power in the life of the believer, the power which prompts his every thought, desire, word, and deed. The love of Christ constrains him. This is a freedom of the highest order. He lives as he lives, because he wants to out of loving gratitude to Christ who gave His all for him. This makes the Christian highly relevant. In fact, it's one of the few things that is still relevant to our modern world. For the willing slave of Christ it now becomes a way of life which daily draws strength and power from the cross of our crucified and risen Redeemer. And he takes his place beside the Apostle Paul and declares by word and deed to a world that cannot possibly understand him, to a world in which he must truly seem a misfit and an oddball, he affirms with Paul: "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). He is free at last. Why is he free? God has given him - has given us a powerful weapon! He has given into our hands the Sword of the Spirit - His Almighty Word. Armed with that Word let's really get busy and tell the world that we have a message that is still relevant in 2003 - a message that is relevant because it alone can answer man's basic question, "What must I do to be saved?", a message that is relevant because it alone is able to provide the wisdom that will make our lives purposeful and meaningful right here and now. And that message will always be relevant, not only because man is still the same selfish, self-centered creature that he has always been ever since the Fall - but, above all, because we have a gracious God who does not change. For where sin abounds, there His grace, His mercy, His goodness abounds even more.

May God continue His grace to us so that we hang on to that message for dear life. Because that's what's at stake - the precious lives redeemed by the precious blood of our loving Saviour.