

## **We Live in the Greatest Mission Field the World has Ever Known**

In today's message, I would like to invite you to compare America today 2022 in contrast to the America I grew up in during the 1970's as a young adult.

I understand that for many, if not most, it is impossible to have a grid for this comparison.

But please allow me to assure you that 50 years has made a difference.

A biblical thread ran deeply through the centuries across languages, cultures and was intricately woven into the entire fabric of Western Culture.

### **European Countries originally influenced by Christian Culture**



From the times of the Apostles, to the time when Constantine's conversion to Christ in 312 AD transformed the entire Roman Empire, the foundation of all Western Civilization from the far reaches of Hadrian's Wall near the border of Scotland, and the conversion of the Druids in England and Ireland, to the Atlantic coasts of Spain & Portugal, spanning France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland & the Netherlands, the Nordic countries of Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, the European & Asian nations of Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Chechnya, Ukraine, and Russia, the influence of Christianity was ubiquitous.





There are some who might question the validity of the “Christian Faith” held among those who first settled the Americas, but no one could truly make the case that the founding of these nations - Canada, United States of America, Mexico, as well as the Central America and South America were not woven together with threads of Christianity. Christianity was the glue that held the ethos of Western Civilization together.

Admittedly there were many differing expressions of Christianity, but Christ and His Gospel was the common bond.

Colossians 1:15-17, NIV, The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, **and in him all things hold together.**

The cultural roots for a transition out of Western Christian Culture can be traced to the Age of Enlightenment (1685 to 1815).

The Enlightenment brought about the triumph of scientific rationality over sacred revelation; the rise of philosophical materialism and Naturalism that for all intents and purposes dispensed with the belief in or the role of God in human affairs and the destiny of the world.

German born, Friedrich Nietzsche, became one of the most influential modern philosophers who lived from 1844 to 1900.



The statement, “God is Dead,” has been attributed to Nietzsche. This quote is often misunderstood or taken out of context. Nietzsche was referring to how the Age of Enlightenment had contributed to the erosion of religious beliefs, which had long served as a foundational belief system for much of the world.

When I was a teenager in Toronto, Canada, our home church, Evangel Temple, was one block from Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, (Canada’s counterpart to Boston’s MIT) where they held “God is Dead” rallies in defiance of the existing Christian Culture of the 1960s.

In general, the Western World went from having a firm foundation of “faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior,” to the foundational breakdown of the Christian cultural underpinnings.

The outright attacks and breakdown of the Christian Culture has been furiously happening, led by philosophers, Humanists, Marxists, Socialists and many other secularized thinkers and teachers.

One of the foundational understandings that Christian culture rallied around was the claim of Christ that Jesus was and is “God come in the flesh. This foundational ‘World View’” that shaped Western Culture ideologically, was based upon our adherence to Jesus’s own words in:

John 14:1-11 NKJV, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, **“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.** “If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves.”

The Disciples had walked with Jesus, day in and day out for three (3) years. They had seen Jesus personally in virtually every manner possible.

They had seen Jesus, “Turning Water into Wine,” His first miracle John 2: 1-11  
They saw Jesus Healing the Official’s son by simply speaking the word John 4: 46-54  
They had been with Jesus when He healed the paralytic man at the Pool of Bethesda  
John 5:1-15

They had watched Jesus feed the 5,000 men plus women and children John 6:5-14

They had seen with their own eyes Jesus walking on the water John 6: 16-24

They watched as Jesus healed the man who had been blind since birth John 9: 1-7

They saw Jesus raise Lazarus, His friend from the dead. John 11: 41-43

They watched Jesus heal the Roman soldier’s ear that Peter had cut off in the Garden of Gethsemane Luke 22:49-51

Even though His disciples had lived with, walked with, ate with Jesus for three and a half years, they had to be challenged by the Lord Himself for their tendency to succumb to skepticism and unbelief.

Thomas earned the title, “Doubting Thomas.”

John 20: 19-29 NKJV, “Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.” When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. So Jesus said to them again, “Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.” And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, “We have seen the Lord.” So he said to them, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.” And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, “Peace to you!” Then He said to Thomas, “Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” And Thomas answered and said to Him, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. **Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.**”

If it was hard for Jesus’ own disciples to sustain faith, then we must not be too discouraged when our own personal faith flags.

Luke 22:31 – 34, NKJV, And the Lord said, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren.” But he said to Him, “Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.” Then He said, “I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.”

We live in a time of “Uncertainty.”

We live in a time of “Revisionist History.”

We live in a Culture that has been destabilized and deliberately moved off of its foundational moorings.

We are told that we live in a “Nation of Laws.”

But the reality is that that our culture has developed or should I say disintegrated to the point that there are no standards of Truth and no Rights or Wrongs. The Cultural Social Fabric is torn to the point that there is no longer meaningful “cohesion.” We have lost our “Christian Heritage” and we now must refocus the lens of our understanding of the very times that we live in.

Open our Eyes Lord.

II Kings 6:14-18 NKJV, “Therefore he (King Aram of Syria) sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city (of Dothan where Elisha was). And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” And Elisha prayed, and said, “Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. So when the Syrians came down to him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, and said, “Strike this people, I pray, with blindness.” And He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.”

I believe that we as the Church of Jesus Christ, “The Ekklesia,” the “Called out ones,” must “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain,” Revelation 3:2. Those of us who have lived through this demise must stop pining over the losses. Another story in the book of Ezra depicts the people who had seen the magnificence of Solomon’s first Temple in Jerusalem and wept at the meager appearance of the second Temple during its dedication. This story is a depiction of our times - people rejoicing and weeping simultaneously.

Instead of lamenting the all too apparent losses of what we perceive to be the demise of Western Christian Culture, we must see this world we are living in as “The Greatest Mission Field in the History of the Planet.”

8 Billion Souls, most of whom have not heard the stories of Jesus shared with them in a winsome, credible and compelling manner.

We must say like Paul:

### **1 Timothy 1: 1-14:**

**1.** I Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,

**2.** To Timothy, a beloved son:

Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **Timothy’s Faith and Heritage**

**3.** I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as *my* forefathers *did*, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day,

**4.** greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy,

**5.** when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

**6.** Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands.

**7.** For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

### **Not Ashamed of the Gospel**

**8.** Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,

**9.** who has saved us and called *us* with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

**10.** but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, *who* has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel,

**11.** to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

**12.** For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, **for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.**

### **Be Loyal to the Faith**

**13.** Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus.



14. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

See the World for What It Is, A Broken Fallen Place.

Love the people for who they are - Needy, Lost, having little or No Hope.

Ask God for His Grace - Keep Caring, keep Believing for His Best in both yours and their lives.

Remember, This World is NOT your Home, We are simply Sojourners, Pilgrims passing through.

And no matter what things look like, smell, taste or feel like, Proverbs 4:18 (NKJV) says, "But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day."

That means, ...it's getting brighter and better every day.

Hosea 6:1-3 says, "Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight. Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter *and* former rain unto the earth.