

Dearly Beloved,

Remember - we're attempting to solve all the world's problems with this newsletter over the next several months. A subscription to the St. Cloud Times costs \$17.35 a month, but this newsletter is free. You tell me what the better value is.

Last month we looked at nihilism - the idea that nothing has meaning. It is the logical conclusion of Darwin - we are just molecules who evolved and evolved and evolved. A human is just a more advanced monkey. Everything we do is determined since we are slaves to our evolutionary biology, and so life really isn't worth living.

It's a dark outlook on life, but sadly it's fairly prominent. The only way out of it is to repent and return to God; look at what He says about us in His Word. He tells us that we've been created in the image of God, and so we have dignity. He tells us that we have been fearfully and wonderfully made, and that He personally created us in the womb. Yeah, sometimes life is rough, but that's not because the whole thing is meaningless. It's because of sin - a defect; it's not how God designed the world. Since God created us in His image, He gave us personal agency. He wanted us to love Him, but true love is not forced. Our parents chose to rebel; by rebelling against God, they rebelled against the one in whose image they had been created. That's why we have angst. But God restores His creation, and He did that by sending His Son to die and rise for us. That's Christianity. That's the only *good* way out of nihilism.

Of course there's a *bad* way out of nihilism. It's called existentialism. It's all a Danish Lutheran's fault. Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was tired of being depressed, which, good for him. But his proposed solution, called existentialism, is problematic. Kierkegaard said if we live in reality, there's nothing to be happy about. So he proposed taking a leap of faith. He separated reason and faith. He said if you're reasonable, you'll be depressed because you realize all of life is determined and doesn't have meaning. So he proposed the only way to be happy is to be unreasonable, and that is called faith. Just believe something for the sake of believing it and you'll be happier. It doesn't matter what it is, just as long as you believe it.

At first glance, you might think there's something there because he used words like faith. But this is not Christianity; it's cuckoo land. For Kierkegaard, it doesn't matter if Jesus actually came back from the dead. The logic of Kierkegaard is any religion is valid if you believe it. It just matters if you believe it and it makes you happy. However, remember what St. Paul says - **“If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Cor 15:14).**

The world is overcome with existentialism; instead of looking for happiness in the only place it is found, Jesus Christ, they are looking for it in themselves, namely their own psyches. This is

why drugs are popular; it provides an escape from reality. This is why virtual realities and alternative universes are being built; people can't stand this current reality and so are seeking meaning in anything else, and they don't care if it's real.

But Christianity is real. Christianity doesn't ask you to take a leap of faith. It does demand faith, but it demands faith for a reason. And that reason is this - God actually became a man. He actually died on the cross for you, and He really came back from the dead. He's really coming back again to make all things new. The best synonym for faith is trust - trusting in Jesus that He really did take care of everything on the cross, and trusting that He's coming back again.

Next month we'll tackle social justice - why it's not social, why it's not justice, and why we as Christians actually do need to step up and do good works in our world. Might be kind of spicy. I'd like to see the St. Cloud Times do that.

In Christ,

Pastor Reber