

Saturday, September 8, 2007

## **AM I BEING AN OLD FOGEY?**

Rev. Provocateur. That is what the current Christianity Today calls Mark Driscoll, the latest hot celebrity in the ecclesiastical world. A few months ago it was Ted Haggard and before that was Rick Warren. And then there was Dallas Willard. Even we Christians love our celebrities (Mr. Driscoll shares this issue of CT with Tony Dungy, whose name is in larger type on the cover.) Mr. Driscoll, who is 36, started a church, Mars Hill, in Seattle some 11 years ago, it now has 6000 in attendance and his goal is 20,000. According to men I respect, Mr. Driscoll is a Calvinist in his Doctrine of Salvation (Soteriology) and apparently is saved, a brother in Christ. But his methods are over the top Emergent church- very, very contemporary. The large photo of him in the CT story shows him preaching in what is his standard garb: well worn (sloppy) blue jeans, untucked sports shirt, open at the top, with old comfortable shoes. According to the article, his language and illustrations are unapologetically crude and his demeanor is "in your face" and sarcastic. Knowing this about him, I would not attend any Service where he was preaching. If what this article says is true, I would find him very offensive. Interestingly, the largest segment of the mostly young, hip crowd that does gather to hear him are young single women. Trying to sort out my reaction to him, I don't want to be just a reactionary old fogey, stuck in my traditional ways. What objective reasons could I have for my disapproval of Mr. Driscoll's methods and others who also use them?

Mr. Driscoll seems to want to appear as though he were the same kinda people as the folks in his audience. He wants to connect with them, relate and communicate with them. He might very well prefer and enjoy the persona he has, in itself. What seems missing, in a nutshell, is respect for the Holy, the Altogether Different, the Transcendent. If he does respect the Holy how does he show that? I am showing respect for Mark Driscoll by calling him Mister.God has a holy Name, a Holy Day, a holy Place, a holy Meal, a holy People and a holy Book. This means the Name, Day, Place, Meal, People and Book are not the same as every other name, day, place, meal, people and book. They are altogether unique and different. How do we show we believe this? A major part of the problem we are addressing is that many of today's Preachers and "Christians" do not believe this. But the question for those of us who do believe is how do we show reverence to these holy things? People in the Catholic Tradition use Sanctuaries, Altars, Sacraments, Rituals, Symbols and Signs, special Language, Special Days and Celebrations and vested Clergy. Supposedly, many young adults are turned off by all this "holy" stuff. Tell that to the growing numbers of youth attracted to the Catholic Tradition with all these elements. Tell that to all the young adults who are attracted to the mystical (chants, candles, contemplative prayer, etc) and seek holy places and practice holy rituals, albeit not the Catholic ones. (Maybe the would-be preachers in contemporary churches are the ones who are turned off by the Traditional and they use the young generation as their rational.) That Mr. Driscoll is attracting large crowds does not prove what he does is good or right, but only that it attracts large crowds of certain types of people. What is good or right must be determined by the Scripture, not by crowds of the unsaved or by whether it is "successful" by today's standards. Scripture calls for respect of what is Holy. That is the standard we need. The clothing Mr. Driscoll wears while functioning publicly as the Senior Pastor of Mars Hill Church, as well as the language and techniques he uses, show great respect for his audience. What they like and want is what he gives to them. He does believe in showing (them) respect. It is important to realize that his audience is of a certain type of young adults who reflect the culture and values of a particular time and place, mostly today's urban Seattle (and other places like it). He is not respecting or trying to please or connect with other audiences of other types, places and values. He is not respecting the segment of the population to which I belong (even though Scripture is full of admonitions to honor, i.e.- respect, Parents and the Elderly). This topic does not concern just Mark Driscoll. There are many Mark Driscoll wannabes in churches around the country. They look and sound like him, in varying degrees. What we are discussing here applies to them all. My question is: what clothing and language and techniques used by a Pastor during a Church Service show respect for God and what is Holy, according to Scripture? Actually, this is the standard by which to judge everything about the Service and everyone in it. It might well turn out that some "Pastors" and some "Worship Services" are really not about respecting God and what is Holy at all. At best, these men and their meetings might best be described as public meetings for the purpose of "evangelism", ministering primarily to so-called seekers and non Christians. The Meeting is not about Worship at all, it is not primarily for Christians and the preacher is not functioning as a Pastor. That would explain a lot. In that case, maybe the rules and expectations for everyone and everything might be very different. What Mark Driscoll does and says and looks like might make some sense to me in that case. But, Mr. Driscoll's meetings are said to be to be Church Worship Services. New Testament worship was centered in the (weekly) Lord's Supper. It included prayers, Scripture and Preaching. It is interesting that by the 4th Century the Service had two parts. The first part was public and featured the prayers, Scripture and Preaching. When it came time to celebrate the Eucharist, that first part of the meeting ended and the "public" left. The members remained for the second half. Only those who had come to faith and had been baptized and

confirmed, having been catechized, were welcome to stay for The Supper. Perhaps this practice could be a useful model for today, ministering to both the inquirers and the faithful. The test would be whether what is done in the first meeting leads to people going into the second. If the hip young adults of Seattle and elsewhere that come for the public meetings, never come to saving faith, do not get baptized or catechized and publicly confirm their faith and thus become members of the Church, those public meetings fail the grade. The Church Service is not about evangelism. It is for Christians. It is about Worship, Eucharistic Worship. Back to the matter of showing respect to God and the Holy. The word "Respect" means the following-Dictionary definitions for "respect", noun and verb-To have or show esteem for or to have or show a sense of the worth or excellence of ...To give deference to a right, privilege, privileged position, or someone or something considered to have certain rights or privileges; proper acceptance or courtesy;To give reverence, veneration, honor, esteemThe Name (person) of God, Sunday and Worship, the Lord's Supper, the Church and the Bible are Holy and all are to be treated with respect, as defined. The question is: How are we to demonstrate reverence, veneration, honor and esteem to each of them? This is not really a difficult question. The answer simply calls for Believers to gather on the Lord's day in a place set aside as unto the Lord, consecrated, holy- the House of God. Everything about it should convey this purpose. Nothing about it should detract from this purpose. Walking in, anyone should "get this message".There should be two focal points: a Pulpit (or lectern) for preaching and a Holy Table for celebrating Holy Communion at each Service. The preaching should be based on the Bible, revered and treated as the very Word of God written. Standing to listen to it read would convey respect. Respect for the Lord's Supper would be shown by how it is conducted and by whom. The Table and the Elements used would all be treated as holy. Kneeling would convey respect. Who is allowed to participate and how they do it should also demonstrate reverence and respect.The behavior of the congregation, how they talk and sing and pray, must demonstrate that they respect themselves as the Holy People of God and what their business is for which they have assembled. (The meaning of the word "liturgy" is "the work of the people".) The clothing of all the congregants and particularly of the Clergy and Worship Leaders (including the ushers) should show that they are dressed to do holy work and are ministering to a Holy God. In Synagogues today, Rabbis wear a skull cap to show their respect for being in the presence of God and a prayer shawl around their shoulders, over their business suits to indicate what they are about. Jesus and Paul would have done the same, when they ministered in the synagogues of their day. Am I just being an old fogey? No! There are important theological and Biblical concepts at stake in this discussion of Mark Driscoll and others like him. We are talking about what the Church is about and what the Services of the Church are for. We are talking about what is Holy and how to respect it. We are talking about how to please and honor God when we gather in His Name in His House around His Table to hear His Word and to be His People.

Posted by Cal in Church at 14:00