



July 7, 2019

OPEN

How did a false trumpet signal for retreat change the course of a battle in 1912? Read the fascinating story of [Ahmed Ademovic](#). One of the challenges to the message of the Gospel is that it can be corrupted. Today, there are many brilliant but false “trumpet sounds” which are leaving Christians comfortable but confused. But the way Jesus proclaimed the Gospel in Mark 1:1-20 helps Christians can navigate the forces of consumerism.

Consumerism is not just having things. It describes the person whose meaning and purpose in life depends upon goods and services. The mantra that sounds funny at first is tragically true for our society: “I shop, therefore I am.”

DIG

[1] Anticipation of the Gospel - March 1:1-13

Founded – the Gospel is rests upon all God’s OT promises – vv. 1-2

Readied – John prepared the way for Jesus to proclaim the Gospel – vv. 3-8

Affirmed – Jesus preached after His baptism and temptation – vv. 9-13

Because Mark appealed to a Roman crowd, he did not assume prior understanding of God’s Law which highlighted man’s unrighteousness. Yet Mark made it very clear that Jesus is the answer to humanity’s alienation from God. Consider the conclusion of one Roman in **Mark 15:39**.

[2] Declaration of the Gospel - Mark 1:14-15

Mark’s account is abrupt when describing Jesus’ launch into ministry (compare with Mathew 4:12-17). What was the Good News which Jesus preached?

A message of culmination – “the time is fulfilled” and “the Kingdom of God is at hand” shows us that the Gospel flowed out of God’s eternal, redemptive plan

A message of conversion – we see that there is a call to “repent and believe”

Jesus commanded a response of faith. The Gospel demands we act upon the gift of grace which is freely offered in Christ. And the very fact that it is a gift compels us to either accept or reject Christ.

[3] Reaction to the Gospel - Mark 1:16-20

To think that we can simply use the Gospel to sanctify our western notions of prosperity is absurd. When Jesus proclaimed the Gospel He compelled people to follow Him which meant turning their backs upon all their self-made ambitions and possessions. Consider what we are told **II Corinthians 5:14-15**.

There are two ways we are compelled by Christ and these go hand in hand:

- a. To be a follower of Jesus b. To be a fisher of men**

In 1955 economist Victor Lebow stated, “Our enormously productive economy demands that we make consumption our way of life, that we convert the buying and use of goods into rituals, that we seek our spiritual satisfaction and our ego satisfaction in consumption. We need things consumed, burned up, worn out, replaced and discarded at an ever-increasing rate.” (read more in the article [Is the Church Being Consumed With Consumerism?](#))

Marketing is increasingly more masterful and manipulative. When combined with the formative adolescent years, we have an emerging culture of consumers rather than producers, as described by Benjamin Barber. In **Consuming Youth: Leading Teens Through Consumer Culture** (Zondervan, 2010. Authors John Berard, James Penner and Rick Bartlett, write that “our advanced capitalist society creates and environment where *being sexy, being cool, and being credentialed* have become the drivers and the engine of a marketed youth culture that’s at once powerfully attractive and potentially destructive to youth.” (50)

But consumerism is not limited to youth. At any age we can be confused about finding our life’s meaning in things or in Christ alone.

REFLECT

There are several ways the Gospel can be corrupted by consumerism. It is not the possession that is wrong, but our dependence upon it. And also consider...

1. *Upward mobility seepage* – the idea in the Western world that a person must accumulate more wealth as one moves through life has found its way into unbiblical health and wealth doctrines.
2. *It’s a numbers game* – we see consumerist thinking in the church when the success of ministry efforts is measured only by numbers, whether that is about attendance or budgets.
3. *This pew is just too hard* – consumerism is part of our churches when we become focused upon building spaces that concentrate only on the participants comfort.
4. *Generosity with strings attached* – consumeristic Christians are not necessarily opposed to giving gifts but they tend to do so with some expectation of a reward.
5. *Membership has its privileges* – consumerism exists when believers act like club members who pay dues, and therefore can expect to consume certain goods and services when they wish.
6. *The emergence of experts* – one feature of a consumeristic society is deferring to experts and this also occurs in the Church when too much emphasis is put on professional clergy.
7. *Compelled by the bottom line* – a consumer driven Christian assesses only the resources that are in place before launching out into a new venture for God.

What is your response today? Will you honor God first and not be drawn into consumer-Christianity? Or will you struggle and strive for meaning in things?