

The Eternal Word in a Changing World



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Our world is in a constant state of change. Flash back ten years: cell-phones were used primarily for texting and making phone calls. Today they are as much computers as phones, used for browsing the web, playing games, listening to music, and watching the latest show.

Twenty-five years ago the internet was in its infancy. Today we're entering the "internet of things" era, in which everything—phones, televisions, thermostats, home alarm systems, and more—are integrated and communicate with each other.

Fifty years ago colour television was a novelty, seventy-five years ago black-and-white was in its infancy, and one hundred years ago television was nothing more than an idea. Today we have choice in video entertainment like never before, through Netflix and other streaming options. Even satellite and cable seem outdated by comparison. What's more, through avenues like YouTube almost anyone can produce a video series of their own and have the potential to reach an audience of millions.

And that's all just in the realm of technology. In the same period of time we've seen world wars and cold wars. We've seen women get the vote across the Western world and the end of segregation in the United States. We've seen dramatic cultural shifts in terms of what constitutes acceptable moral behaviour on issues of life and sexuality. One can only imagine what the next one hundred years will bring.

In the midst of this cultural and technological flux, it's comforting

to know that some things do not change. Primary among them is the centrality of Scripture and its ongoing authority over the life of the Church. "Heaven and earth will pass away," Jesus tells us, "but My words shall not pass away" (Mark 13:31). St. Peter, quoting Isaiah, says the same: "The grass withers and the flower fades, but the Word of the Lord remains forever" (1 Peter 1:24-25, Isaiah 40:8).

"The Word of the Lord Remains Forever." *Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum*. These words were the motto, the rallying cry of the Lutheran Reformation. Throughout the upheavals and debates of their era, the reformers clung firm to this principle. Scripture was the Word of God. Scripture was trustworthy. It held authority over and above the church's traditions, over and above the decrees of the papacy. It was solid. A rock. And it would last forever.

The challenges of our time are similar in some ways to those of the Reformation. In both eras, for example, we see a lack of confidence in the Bible. The Western world is a post-Christian one and consequently few people have much use for Holy Writ. Even among those who call themselves Christian, many downplay the value of the Bible. Entire Christian denominations have jettisoned the clear teaching of Scripture on various points—notably on issues of human sexuality and the sacredness of human life. Some further deny, in practice if not explicitly, the exclusive truth claims of Christianity—that Jesus

alone is the Way, the Truth, and Life—all for fear of offending those of another faith.

These people look at the changes in public opinion around them and determine it is the Bible, not our culture, which is in the wrong. So they remake God in their own image.

But God does not change simply because we want Him too. Neither does His Word. The Ten Commandments are as applicable today as they ever were. The Law is just as clear on what God demands of us as it ever was. Moreover, it is just as clear that we fail to keep the Law as we ought—and that we are subsequently deserving of God's rejection and wrath.

But thank God, it is not merely the Law which does not change. So too the promises of God are eternal. The Gospel remains true forever—the Good News that Jesus Christ has died to take away our sins and risen again to give us new life. This is, at its core, the message of all Scripture: Christ for you. Christ loving you. Christ saving you.

"God's Word forever shall abide, no thanks to foes who fear it," writes Martin Luther in his famed hymn *A Mighty Fortress*. He's right: the Word of the Lord indeed stands forever, whatever other changes the world might undergo. And thank God for that.

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