

The powerless church

By Cal Thomas

Tribune Content Agency

“O never give me over to my own heart’s desires, nor let me follow my own imaginations!” –
[John Wesley](#)

There are many reasons for the modern church’s loss of its prophetic voice, politics being just one of them. As in ancient times, trying to embrace what the rest of the world is doing has diminished the power of the church to address what used to be called “sinful behavior.”

The latest, but surely not the last example, is what the United Methodist Church did last week at their [convention](#) in Charlotte, North Carolina. Delegates voted 523 to 161 to replace the definition of marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman and will now allow gay Methodist ministers to be ordained and perform same-sex marriages. They dropped language that said homosexual practice “is incompatible with Christian teaching.” [African delegates](#) voted against the change. What do they know that others have forgotten?

Marriage between a man and a woman IS compatible with Christian teaching. The majority of delegates should read and obey the Scriptures that John Wesley, the founder of their denomination, preached without compromise.

In Genesis, it says: “A man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two will become one flesh.” The idea is to express love through mutual pleasure and produce children. ([Genesis 2:24](#))

Jesus quotes that verse in the New Testament, affirming traditional marriage ([Matthew 19:5-6](#))

In Judges, it says: “In those days Israel had no king. Everyone did as he saw fit” ([Judges 21:25](#)). We see that reflected in today’s attitudes about sex, marriage and so many other things.

Paul writes that in the end times, “to suit their own desires, they will gather round them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear” ([2 Timothy 4:3](#)). We have entered that age and not just when it comes to faith. It’s the same with politics and politicians, too many of whom are telling us what we want to hear, rather than what we need to hear.

There are numerous warnings about what will happen – and has happened – if especially religious leaders ignore Scripture. The ancient Israelites were severely punished for doing just that and now too many Christian denominations are climbing into the same boat. But the boat is sinking, as reflected in the number of people who have left these churches.

As [The New York Times](#) reported about Methodism three years ago, “America’s second-largest Protestant denomination is in the final stages of a slow motion rupture that has so far seen the

departure of a quarter of the nation's roughly 30,000 United Methodist churches, according to the denomination's news agency." It has only gotten worse since then. What else should be expected if the preaching and teaching reflects what the secular world believes? Why attend these churches? Many congregants are fleeing to other denominations, spending their Sunday mornings at a local coffee shop or staying home.

To put things on a secular level, most businesses that lose customers would change their way of doing business to win them back. Not the Methodists, Episcopalians, United Presbyterians, and a branch of Lutherans among others. They are doubling down. Strongly evangelical churches that believe and preach Scripture are growing. Heresy is a bad "business model" for the church. [Martin Luther](#) said: "Peace if possible, truth at all costs." If we can't agree on truth, then anything goes.

Historically, the church has been a moral voice when it stood for what Scripture calls "righteousness." It affirmed doing right things and opposed wrong things. It was a major influence in ending slavery, promoting the right to vote for women and civil rights. While there was opposition to all these, the right prevailed.

If the church has lost its voice, who will speak up against wrong things? Who will listen?

Readers may email Cal Thomas at tcaeditors@tribpub.com. Look for Cal Thomas' latest book "A Watchman in the Night: What I've Seen Over 50 Years Reporting on America" (HumanixBooks).

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