

Hope for the World -- Renewing the Magic of Jesus' Time

As bad as the world seems today, it is no worse than in Jesus' time. While we may think of our culture as cruel, it pales in comparison with the Roman rule of Jesus' time. Historians consider the Roman Empire to be one of the greatest civilizations in history, but if you weren't in the ruling class, it wasn't great at all. It was a time that required people to worship Caesar as divine. Imperial theology was really a propaganda tool for the security of the emperor's rule. The Bible tells us that Jesus addressed the conditions prevalent at the time, specifically oppression, impoverishment, hunger and debt because of high taxation. Roman rule was brutal to all but the elite in a strict hierarchical system. If you complained about the system your life was in danger. An example is that after Jesus' birth, Herod had all of the young male children killed in Bethlehem and the surrounding region because he was afraid of losing his power to the newborn King.



The teachings of Jesus were in sharp contrast to the culture of the time. Early Christians gave hope to the people, not only for eternal life but for the equality of all people. Jesus gave hope for a life of peace and joy. Although it was risky to be a believer at the time, it was attractive because of its positive values – kindness, patience, courage, thoughtfulness, selfless care and love. And it provided hope to people who needed hope.

First century Christians differentiated themselves from the Roman culture. Differentiation of Christians from our culture is becoming increasingly lacking in today's world. Christians today tend to blend in with our culture. We have become comfortable with mediocracy, going through the motions and not advocating for the faith, outside the safety of our churches. This is possibly because we think the task to change our culture today for the better is hopeless. We have allowed today's culture of intolerance and secularism to hold us back.

We are not alone. Keep in mind that first century Christians started with just a few people who multiplied their efforts by not only teaching God's Word, but living it as well. Today our starting point includes many Christians who just need to be motivated and mobilized. And, most of our world isn't as barbaric as in Jesus' time. We need a course correction before we drift further away from the Will of God. We don't need the second coming of Jesus for a renewal of the faith. Jesus empowers us as the "Light of the World." He says we shouldn't hide from the opportunity to enlighten those around you. *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).*

So, where do we start? Matthew Kelly outlines steps you could take to begin your role in positive change.

1. Confirm through prayer that you wish to change yourself into being what God intended you to be, and ask for His help. Spend time regularly in prayer.
2. Seek multiple opportunities each day to show the values of your faith in action – kindness, patience, courage, thoughtfulness and selfless caring toward others. Doing small things for others can make a big difference to them. These are called Holy Moments because they are examples of putting faith into action and being the person God intended you to be.
3. Find some way to encourage other Christians to spread the concept of Holy Moments to others, and they, in turn, to people they know. Our influence multiplies with each person who grasps the concept of Holy Moments.
4. Use every opportunity to publically provide encouragement and hope to others. Use social media as a means for this. Also, send personal notes to people who need encouragement. Verbally affirm positive things you see others doing.

The result of these steps will result in people looking at you, as a person of faith, differently. It doesn't take a theologian to do our part by helping others. It will gradually create a culture of positive feelings among people that will multiply as others become a part of this culture.

Each era of time has its challenges. The culture of Jesus time was no exception. All is not lost today. Together we can do this!

The Bible says: *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another*" (John 13:34-35).

All the devotions in this "Holy Moment" series are based on key points and quotations from the Matthew Kelly book, The Biggest Lie in the History of Christianity. This book motivated me to share the authors plan for Christians everywhere to show their faith by helping other people. If we all do this, others will take notice that the Christian faith will make this a better world. It is my hope and prayer that Christians will unite and reverse some of the unhealthy trends we see in today's world. The world desperately needs to be on a different path than it is on today. You and I can make a difference.

I highly recommend you read this book, The Biggest Lie in the History of Christianity, by Matthew Kelly.