

A Wake Up Call: Waking Up TO Our Evangelical Identity

A Presentation by Kelly Fryer based on "Reclaiming the E Word" (Augsburg Fortress, 2008) delivered at the 2008 Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod assembly.

This is how God works!

- We are "blessed to be a blessing" (Genesis 12:1ff)
- "I bore you on eagles wings and brought you to myself...[and] you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:4-6)
- "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21)
- God "consoles us in all our affliction so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction" (2 Corinthians 1:4)

Isn't this how your story goes?

- How has God's loving mission of salvation, freedom, healing, peace, forgiveness, and freedom come *to* you, lately?
- How has God's loving mission of salvation, freedom, healing, peace, forgiveness, and freedom come *through* you, lately, making a difference in somebody else's life?

This is the big idea at the heart of Lutheran theology.

- God comes down to save us and to set us free...
- ...so that we can love and serve our neighbor.

And this is what it means to be the church.

- What would be different in our congregations if we really believed this?
- For many of us, it's time to reclaim the "E" word!



Five Patterns found in "evangelical" congregations:

- They are awake to the "real deal."
 - God is *real* to people in these congregations.
 - "It is by no means enough to have *knowledge* of the Christian faith..."
But too many church leaders are only interested in "making people Lutheran and do not deem it important that with this profession such people become genuine Christians to the very core. They therefore regard true confession of faith as merely a means of strengthening their own ecclesiastical party and not as an entrance upon a life of zealous future service of God." - Philipp Jakob Spener, Pia Desideria (1675)
 - "In the end, all evangelical ministry boils down to the reality of Jesus coming to people." - Richard Bliese & Craig Van Gelder (editors), *The Evangelizing Church: A Lutheran Contribution* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), p. 39.
 - "It's no accident that you're here. We've been praying for you. We believe God has brought you here and wants to touch your life. You are among friends." - The Associate Pastor At "Changed Lives Lutheran Church," from *Reclaiming the E Word*, 2008
- They are awake to a vital word.
 - "One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, as Christ says, John 11 [25], 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me,

For more information:

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though he die, yet shall he live'..." - Martin Luther, Christian Liberty (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), p. 8.

- Three things people need to know about the Bible:
 - The Bible is a risk God was willing to take.
 - The Bible is not the final word on ANYTHING; Jesus Christ is.
 - God is still speaking through the Biblical story.
- Three questions to use in Bible "study" in your congregation:
 - What is God doing in this text?
 - What do you hear God saying to you, personally, in this text?
 - What do you hear God saying to us, together, in this text?
- They are awake to a purposeful life.
 - God's work – Our hands!
 - "She described what it's like to close off the body behind a curtain to gently clean and carefully prepare it to be visited by family or even just taken away for processing. This is the time, she said with tears in her eyes, when she is most aware of being God's hands in the world. And she tries to remember that this is always the case, in everything she does." - From *Reclaiming the E Word*, 2008
 - "At the crossroads, we are called to heal the sick, feed the hungry, stand with the marginalized, raise the dead, speak truth to power, break down the barriers that divide us from each other and from God, welcome the stranger, and *tell everyone we meet* about what God is up to in Jesus." - From *Reclaiming the E Word*, 2008
- They are awake to our common call.
 - "Evangelical" congregations are characterized by a passionate commitment to reaching those who are not yet a part of the church. Whatever it takes.
 - "If we make the mistake that [the formalities of traditional worship] are irrevocably tied to truth in this form, then we cut ourselves off from reaching people." - A pastor at "Blessed to Be a Blessing" church, *Reclaiming the E Word*, 2008
 - The only metric Martin Luther used was: Does it serve the neighbor. (Preface to the German Mass, 1526)
- They are awake to transformational power.
 - Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
 - Jesus wouldn't ask us to pray for something that isn't possible!
 - How have *you* been changed???



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