

## Sharing Christ in a brWOKEn world

### A Preaching Series for the Summer at HPBC – Sermon 1 – The Lay of the Land

This sermon is intended to offer a very brief historical understanding of three main cultural phenomena that has drastically changed North American culture over the past 60 years. The survey is not comprehensive, but I offer it as a way to understand some of the major ideas that seem to permeate Canadian culture today so that we can get behind the actions and trends and understand the person who seems to be lost in a culture of wokeness.

#### A Different World?

In 2014, the University of California produced a list of 52 statements that professors should not use because they might be “harmful” to their students, among them was the statement, “I believe the most qualified person should get the job.” That statement was deemed harmful by the University of California.

In 2020 Leslie Neal-Boylan, the dean of the nursing school at the University of Massachusetts, was fired after she received backlash from a student about an email to the campus community saying "EVERYONE'S LIFE MATTERS." She was fired because she said, “Black lives matter, and Everyone’s life matters.” She lost her job, her income, and her career.

Professors Erika and Nicholas Christakis had to leave their jobs at Yale University in 2015 because they questioned whether or not the University should be engaged in regulating potentially offensive Halloween costumes. Students said the professors made them feel unsafe just by asking the question. The students, who felt unsafe, went on a vindictive rampage calling for the professors to be fired. The “unsafe” students bereded, cursed and verbally abused the pair, and Erika even received a death threat. Eventually, the two resigned. All this because they did not feel that the University should police Halloween costumes.

Closer to home, Journalist and lawyer, Jamil Jivani was fired from Bell Media because he refused to do a radio show on how racist Canada was in the days leading up to Canada Day in 2021. Jivani is a black man, who said of the firing, “Bell Media was not prepared for a black man who loves his country, rejects victimhood politics, and maintains strong ties with his faith community.” Jivani is a Christian.

And just a year ago, in 2022, School Trustee Mike Ramsay was banned from all School Trustee meetings by his fellow trustees in the Waterloo District School Board because he requested that

the parents be given information about Critical Race Theory which was being taught to children without their parents' knowledge. Mike Ramsay is also a black man who said of his banishment last year, "They pretend to advocate for diversity, inclusion, and equity. But the irony of all this is that when a black person disagrees with them, they are quick to put me in my place."

Defining the Term:

"Wokeism" is a term derived from the African American expression "stay woke," which means to remain aware and vigilant of social and political issues. The origins of Wokeism can be traced back to the Civil Rights Movement, but it has gained significant momentum in recent years and has changed into something that little resembles its origins.

Today, "Wokeism" is a term used to describe a cultural phenomenon which encompasses ideas of victimhood, gender ideology, Critical Race Theory, and the general desire to dismantle or deconstruct Historical Western Society often equated with Colonialism and Christianity. It includes a broad spectrum of anti-Christian, anti-male and anti-western ideas. **It is a movement of predominantly privileged, young, western people**, although today, it is becoming popular in some Eastern cultures with a western influence. In its worst form, woke culture sacrifices the future to the past.

But if we are going to do more than just shake our heads, if we are going to do more than criticize, we need to understand what's going on. And to do that we need to look back and see how we got here. For you can't know where you are if you don't know where you came from.

So this morning, by way of introduction we will examine a few big ideas from the last 60 or 70 years and see how they came together to bring us to the point where large portions of our population want to divide us up into victims and oppressors, into race groups, gender groups, and every other kind of group that suits their political and cultural ideas.

Are you ready to go to school? Here we go!

While a study in human culture is always very complex, and takes a great deal of time, I am going to try to distill our current situation down to **three major cultural ideas** or phenomena that have become predominate and mainstream in the past 60 years or so.

And right off the top I am telling you this is a simplified version of a series of complex social trends, but I hope that I will give you a big enough picture that you will be able to stick with me over the next few weeks to understand what's really going on so we can figure out together how to share Christ in this strange new world.

Come with me now, and I will show you three big cultural shifts and ideas that came together to help bring about our Woke, victimhood culture.

## **BIG IDEA NUMBER 1: CRITICAL THEORY**

Not quite 100 years ago in 1936, in the University in Frankfurt, Germany, a group of scholars were very concerned about the political and social state of Germany and much of Europe. They engaged in a new research project to try to understand why Europe was descending into social upheaval. They wanted to analyze and critique the complex interplay between culture, capitalism, and power. They were disillusioned with Germany as Hitler came to power, and they saw that Russian Marxism was already failing. What they came up with was something called **Critical Theory**.

Critical Theory is an idea that analyzes the power structures, ideologies, and social norms that bring about oppression and inequality in a given society. It's based heavily on historical patterns and situations and how different people groups interact with each throughout history. **The key concepts in Critical Theory include the belief that capitalism is evil, that some groups are victims while other groups are oppressive, and that present situations must be examined through historical lenses.**

**Basically Critical Theory is concerned with breaking down established systems of power to bring about equity and retribution with an emphasis on people groups vs individuals.**

From Critical Theory came Postmodern Thought, Critical Race Theory, Gender Studies, and many other modern ideas about power, oppression, victimhood, democracy and capitalism. The LGBT... movement is a perfect example of Critical Theory in action. Breaking down historical norms, rejecting historical culture, and discarding Christian teaching while claiming that members of the LGBT...are victims of oppression and discrimination at the hands of Western Christianity – that's Critical Theory in action.

So it's a way of looking at the world and focusing on power, and property laws while assuming that one group is always the oppressive group and another group is always the victim.

Today, Critical Theory has become ubiquitous in most western Universities, many corporations, and left-leaning political parties who rely on it to form their practices and policies.

**For example, in 2021, just over a year ago, the Toronto Sun obtained copies of the Federal Government's "anti-racism" training for all of its employees.** It stated that, Perfectionism, a sense of urgency or punctuality, individualism, worship of the written word, objectivity, among other things are all characteristics of white supremacy. You heard correctly, the newest federal

government training on anti-racism says that if you are objective, have a sense of urgency, like getting somewhere on time and you respect your father as the leader of your home, and you're white of course, you are a white supremacist – you just don't know it. **You can't make this stuff up! Truth is stranger than fiction.**

This is Critical Theory in action, it divides and accuses based on historical perceptions of power and it takes the most benign attributes of a person and turns them on their head so as to claim some form of either victim or oppressor. And once it labels the groups, then those groups are always and forever boxed into those labels. **BE VERY CAREFUL CHURCH, THIS STUFF IS MOVING FROM CULTURE AND CREEPING INTO CHRISTIANITY TODAY IN CANADA.**

This is Critical Theory playing out in Canadian politics, which is today called Critical Race Theory – but more on that in a few weeks.

Let's move on to the next big idea or change in our culture in the past 60 years...

### **The Sexual Revolution:**

The Second tidal wave of change was the Sexual Revolution. And without going into too many details on a Sunday Morning, in which we have children present, let me just give you the big picture of changes that have taken place and the final destination that we seem to have landed on.

In 1960 the Birth Control pill was introduced. Almost overnight western attitude, and behaviour changed. Here is the abridged version of those changes from then until now.

- Promiscuity became normalized because the risk of pregnancy was very low
- Stigma was removed from those who openly engaged in promiscuous activities
- Divorce laws were loosened
- Homosexuality was decriminalized
- Divorce rates began to soar to upward of 40%
- Common law marriage was legalized and formalized in tax law
- The LGBT movement became mainstream
- Gay Marriage and Gay Rights were formalized
- LGBT...movement was idealized as the ultimate Canadian cause
- Gender Dysphoria was normalized and renamed Transgender
- Medical and governmental support was given for trans-gendering
- School systems and Mainstream media became the main propagators of this new, extreme ideology
- Biology is no longer the identify factor is someone's sexuality

- Everything goes, everything is on the table, human sexuality is now fully unhinged from reality

Now that's the big picture, but that's not the most important thing for you and me as Christians. What all of this tells us is that in the last 60 years our culture has separated human sexuality with Biblical morality. The Bible clearly teaches that our sexuality is governed by God, and we must submit it to His will. Today, our culture teaches the exact opposite. You govern you, do as you please. In sixty years any idea of God's sovereignty in this area has been removed. After all, that was a "Western Christian Colonial Idea – that God governs your sexuality." Which is exactly what Critical Theory wants us to believe. And that's where things began to get interesting, both the rise of Critical Theory in the Universities and the Sexual Revolution in society have come together and feed off each other to help destabilize traditional Canadian, Christian Culture. Some say this is great, others disagree, it is the breeding ground for a culture war.

It didn't happen over night, but rather a slow influx of big ideas that became mainstream. That's how cultures change.

But there is one more that really helps us to understand how this whole thing got so strange. And you might not expect this one.

### **Big Idea 3: Parenting**

Parenting has changed drastically in the last 60 years for some very strange reasons, but the changes that have occurred and the resulting changes in childhood development have been profound. And to help you understand this I will use the terms that have been used by sociologists in the past 20 years - **Helicopter Parents and Bubble Wrapped Kids**.

Two technologies changed parenting forever. First, the pill, which in less than 15 years in Canada from 1960 – 1975 dropped the birth rate from over 4 children per family to less than 2 kids in the home on average. So, by the 1980's when North America was going through a bit of financial boom, most homes had on average 1 or 2 kids and more time and money than any generation before them to take care of these lovely little ones.

Now, at the same time telecommunication was taking off and it was everywhere. It was the beginning of 24 / 7 mass media assault on our lives. And so, homes were filled with messages from media companies all the time, and because the only way to make money was to keep people watching – all the time, those screens, and ours today, were and are still filled with images that stirred up fear and shock. After all, if it bleeds it leads. That media "truth" has

never been questioned. Mass media, and 24 / 7 news cycles that started in the 80's brought an unnatural fear of society with it. Suddenly, the world outside your door was a very scary place.

So, follow me now, we have, in the 80's, smaller families with fewer kids, and the endless messages that the world is dangerous. So what a parent to do – hover, hover, hover. Drive them to school, watch them in the play ground, put them in organized sports so you can keep your eye on them and keep them “out of trouble” which really meant keep them from unorganised play. And never, never, never, let your kids just “go outside to play alone.” That is just about against the law today.

Now, I know this is so normal now, that I'm sure many of you are already justifying in your head why it is absolutely necessary to watch the children all the time. The scientific truth says the exact opposite.

Over the last 20 years or so, since this way of parenting has become the commonly accepted norm, there has been study after study that warns us of the dangers of not letting children play without supervision, and not letting them have “adult free spaces.”

Unsupervised activity and play in children has a number of profound benefits:

- Unsupervised play teaches children to be creative with rules, to make up and modify them according to various conditions – play teaches that not everything is black and white.
- Unsupervised play teaches children to solve conflicts by argument, negotiation and compromise. In unsupervised play, if you can't make things work the game is over. This is not so in organized sports where adults govern the rules, the time of the game, and any conflicts that arise.
- Unsupervised play has been shown to make children more empathetic and less self-centred. The constant need to take the concerns of others seriously is necessary if they want the game to continue.
- Unsupervised play teaches children about failure and being left out. Both of which are a normal healthy part of human social development.

Believe it or not, moms and dads, if you want your kids to grow up to be confident, problem solving, empathetic adults - let them play – unsupervised, with other children, often.

And all that to bring us back to our Woke culture of today, because parenting changed and became an endless exercise in supervising and organizing, these parents began to expect everyone to look after their kids in the same manner, so teachers became social workers and social works became well, everywhere! And schools and university soon learned that parents expected them to “look after their children” which became more important than “teaching their children.”

And we had participation ribbons, and kids that should have failed but didn't and discipline went out the window, and by the time these kids got to university the universities were expected to be like second parents to them and administration and support staff at universities grew faster than teaching staff because these kids needed someone to look after them, and keep them from getting hurt, or insulted, or stressed, or whatever.

And that is why today, we have an epidemic of fragile teens and young people, who talk about being stressed out, fearful, and unable to cope, who endlessly need adults, and other third parties to fix their problems, and keep them from “harm.”

The main idea behind this is called the infantilization of our population. Infantilization means to treat adults as if they are still children.

So, is it any wonder that University students protest by throw tantrums and yell at teachers and scream at guess speakers who say something they don't like, and get people fired for making them feel, “unsafe.”

And is it any wonder that the University of Toronto, has colouring centres for 20-year-old university students in case they get too stressed because someone said something that they didn't like, or someone challenged their world view, or God, forbid, someone left them out of something.

And so, this is the lay of the land today.

You take a social doctrine like Critical Theory that is now taught in every university and collage in Canada and has made its way into the public school system. A theory that teaches that people are identified and categorised by the group they come from, and that those groups are either victim groups or oppressive groups. And then you add to it the gender theories that came about as the final destination of the sexual revolution, where everything goes, and you don't even have to identify as a boy or a girl. You take those two revolutions in social thought, and you throw a bunch of bubble wrapped kids into the mix, and you come out what the people today call WOKE culture. And as of 2023 this culture has been brewing in Canada and the US for almost 20 years. We are now moving into the second generation of WOKE.

What is a Church to do? How is a Christian to live? And in what way can we effectively share the Gospel in such a confusing world?

I'm glad you asked, because all the answers we need are found right here in the book. And so, for the next 4 weeks we will examine the land, search the scriptures and find ways to preach, teach, and live the good news of Jesus Christ in the Woke Culture of Canada.

And to begin with, this morning, I'm going to show you just how old all of these attitudes are. We are told over and over again that this modern culture is progressive, new, but the truth is, it is ancient, in its attitudes, its characterises, and its deceptions.

For the remainder of the time, we will examine one person in particular that seems to portray the very same characterises and attitudes we find in the Woke Culture of today. Attitudes of: victimhood, cries of unfairness, rejection of authority and the blaming of one group of people for the ills of society.

Who is that person? CAIN. I believe Cain was the first woke person in history. Let's have a look.

Gen. 4 - Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. <sup>3</sup>In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. <sup>4</sup>And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, <sup>5</sup>but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast.

<sup>6</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? <sup>7</sup>If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it."

<sup>8</sup>Now Cain said to his brother Abel, "Let's go out to the field." While they were in the field, Cain attacked his brother Abel and killed him.

<sup>9</sup>Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"

<sup>10</sup>The LORD said, "What have you done?"

Cain was the first woke person on planet earth.

Let's do a little case study in the life of Cain and see just how old Woke really is.



1. Cain was offended because God didn't accept his offering, but He showed favour to his brother. (The system was bias)
2. Cain sulked because God was not fair. (Responded as a child)
3. Cain threw a tantrum and killed his brother, whom God had privileged with acceptance. (Blamed someone else for their "privilege")
4. God confronted Cain and Cain held God's authority in contempt (Self-righteous)
5. Cain did not take any responsibility for his actions, instead he claimed victimhood. (It's God's fault I killed my brother.)

Cain believed that he was the victim, God was the oppressor, and Able was the privilege. His answer was to kill the privilege one, and dismiss the authority of the oppressor God, CAIN WAS WOKE.

So, as we begin our study together, we must ask, as we will every week, how can we share Christ. Well, in this first example, in this big picture of our culture and the gospel I can see three things that must be a part of our witness to the world they are as follows:

1. Grace and compassion
2. A reminder of what is true
3. A commitment to loving them, even from a distance

We will come back to these ideas a number of times over the next few weeks.

But for today, just remember, we must not pick sides, we are not woke, or anti-woke, we are on God's side. We are His people, living in His Kingdom. This is what we have to offer the world. Over the next four weeks, we will see how great that offer really is.

So remember, church, Woke is not new, it's as old as Cain, it's ancient, and we know ancient because we have the Book, which is ancient, the Book teaches us how God sent the good news to a broken, selfish world, and if He could do it then, He can do it now – all we need to do is say – Here I am Lord, send me.

And we will show the world that victory, not victimhood, is the greatest way anyone could ever live, and where do we find that victory? In Jesus Christ our Lord.