

Our Thrill-Seeking Culture

In the recent years we have developed a thrill-seeking culture — a culture moved more by emotional stimuli than careful thought — that affects many facets of our lives. I have not been to a movie in years, but I have seen trailers on TV and digital video, and heard people talk about them. I have noticed many come away more enamored with the thrilling “special effects” while having only a sketchy memory of the plot or story behind the effects. At musical concerts, for the most part, the primary attention is given to special effects to create an emotional atmosphere than to thoughtful lyrics that convey real messages.

I fear this culture is affecting public worship. People are “going to church” — not to be challenged to think on spiritual subjects — but to be thrilled by the “special effects” generated by preachers and “worship leaders”. Rather than songs, clearly worded and sung to praise God and to teach each other — words primarily appealing to the head rather than to the arms and feet — the order of the day is for “special effects” designed to give worshipers an emotional high. Sermons must be jazzed up with verbal and electronic special effects so that the audience can be thrilled rather than informed or convicted in their minds. I am not speaking of the use of visual aids, computer generated or otherwise. Visual aids are great tools when they truly “aid” the listener’s understanding, but when used for emotional thrill and awe value, they are questionable to say the least. I saw a video a while back of a congregation partaking of the Lord’s Supper while an electronically produced large cross was “floating” around the auditorium. A little too much, me thinks.

As I read the New Testament I get the idea public worship is to be done from the heart in a solemn manner, glorifying God and seriously reflecting on the words uttered in the songs, prayers, and discourses.

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