

## Forward to “The Art of Being Human in a Culture of Noise” by Jimmy Mitchell

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One of my intellectual heroes once told me that “nostalgia makes a poor excuse for tradition.” Too many people yearn for a golden age of the distant past without ever seeking to make the age they live in better. It seems to me that the more uncertain the age, the stronger the yearning to go back. I sense this in myself, in the company I keep, and in the students that I have had the privilege to teach. But we cannot go back, nor should we. For if we did, we would likely bring the illnesses of our age with us. Rather, we ought to bring what is good, true, and beautiful in every age and ensure it is deeply rooted in our own. The temptation of uncertain times—and we do live in uncertain times—is to either run from the future, or to run from our past. We set up edifices, draw lines in the sand, create new vocabulary to describe our camp, but the resulting tribalism does nothing to advance the gospel, renew culture nor serve the common good. We may be broken people in a broken world, but we are pilgrims not fugitives. We are not meant to run away, but to journey towards.

The task of every generation is to face their challenges with courage and vigor and receive their blessings with humility and gratitude. Our post-Christian culture will not be evangelized by a program nor a campaign, but by the individual witness of lives lived well on fire with genuine joy and hope and a fierce determination that we are made for something more than this current world has to offer. In other words, if we are to renew our culture, we must first renew ourselves. To do this well, four things are needed. First, we must have a deep sense of who we are and what we are made for—an identity rooted in our being unique, unrepeatable, beloved sons and daughters of God the Father. Second, we must seek out and cultivate real community—the type whose diversity strengthens and hones, and whose charity serves and perfects. Third, we must have a deep sense of urgency to joyfully share the good news and witness to what God has done in our own lives—an authentic and personal proclamation of the kerygma. Lastly, we must cooperate with God’s life-giving grace—a participative *fiat* to God’s invitation to do the work that He has called us to do.

To forsake one’s heritage is loathsome. So too is ignoring one’s vocation to the time and place God has set them in. It is a form of high arrogance to think that you would have been better off, more virtuous, or holier if you were born 40, 50, or 500 years ago. ***For reasons known to God alone, you are here in this time and in this place, with all its challenges and all its opportunities. “How will you respond?”***

This short book will help you answer this question with greater clarity, and a renewed sense of joy and hope.

Now, more than ever, we need to let beauty speak and rediscover the art of sharing the good news in a world desperate for meaning and truth.

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