

Excerpt from *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith*

...Times change. God doesn't, but times do. We learn and grow, and the world around us shifts, and the Christian faith is alive only when it is listening, morphing, innovating, letting go of whatever has gotten in the way of Jesus and embracing whatever will help us be more and more the people God wants us to be. There are endless examples of this ongoing process, so I'll describe just one.

Around 500 years ago, a man named Martin Luther raised a whole series of questions about the painting the church was presenting to the world. He insisted that God's grace could not be purchased with money or good deeds. He wanted everyone to have their own copy of the Bible in a language they could read. He argued that everyone had a divine calling on their lives to serve God, not just priests who had jobs in churches. This concept was revolutionary for the world at that time. He was articulating earth-shattering ideas for his listeners. And they heard him. And something big, something historic, happened. Things changed. Thousands of people connected with God in ways they hadn't before.

But that wasn't the end of it. Luther was taking his place in a long line of people who never stopped rethinking and repainting the faith. Shedding unnecessary layers and at the same time rediscovering essentials that had been lost. Luther's work was part of what came to be called the Reformation. Because of this movement, the churches he was speaking against went through their own process of rethinking and repainting, making significant changes as a result.

And this process hasn't stopped. It can't. In fact, Luther's contemporaries used a very specific word for this endless, absolutely necessary process of change and growth. They didn't use the word reformed; they used the word reforming. This distinction is crucial. They knew that they and others hadn't gotten it perfect forever. They knew that the things they said and did and wrote and decided would need to be revisited. Rethought. Reworked. I'm part of this tradition. I'm part of this global, historic stream of people who believe that God has not left us alone but has been involved in human history from the beginning. People who believe that in Jesus, God came among us in a unique and powerful way, showing us a new kind of life. Giving each of us a new vision for our life together, for the world we live in. And as a part of this tradition, I embrace the need to keep painting, to keep reforming...

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