

THE CHURCH AND CULTURE

Greetings precious people, this week we will look at the affect that Jesus Christ desires to have upon the culture through His Body which is known as the Church. Last time we looked at the radical affect He had on the culture of His day. This same “radical” affect has mandated to His Church without exception through the centuries.

In what is known as both His first recorded sermon and the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke these words to His disciples, Matthew 5:13-16, "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

These two comparisons (salt & light) would be well understood by the people of Jesus' day. Salt was used for 2 main purposes, it was used as an antiseptic for wounds; and due to the lack of any refrigeration as we have today it was spread over meat to stop the putrification process. This would cause another affect on the person that consumed such meat, it would cause a person to thirst.

Light of course helped people see in the darkness but it also exposed that which was covered in darkness. You don't know what is lurking around until you turn on the light. Have you ever turned on the light only to watch critters like cockroaches scurry for the cover of darkness?

These are 3 affects the Church is to have on its culture. It is to act as an antiseptic to the culture, to bring comfort and healing to wounded emotions and broken hearts. It is to stand up against the corrupting power whether it come in the form of government; the wealthy; business; or even from within its own. It is to cause those that don't know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior to thirst for Truth and Righteousness. It is also to act as light both showing the “Way” and exposing the dangers that conceal themselves in darkness.

Jesus was crucified for His work and many followers of Christ since have met similar fate for their obedience. As nonsensical as these acts are to the reasoning mind what it does is shed light upon the condition of man's heart as Jesus describes in John 3:19, “And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

The early Church though it had its difficulties followed Jesus' Words and had such an impact on their culture that their enemies brought the following charges against them, Acts 5:28 “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, *you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine*, and intend to bring this Man's blood on us!” Acts 17:6 “But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, “*These who have turned the world upside down* have come here too.”

I would to God that such charges could be made against the Church today. Instead a horrible indictment needs to be made against it. We have become so much like the world/culture that in many instances one can not distinguish any difference between the two. Rather than the Church affecting the culture the culture has “infected” the Church. We have believed the lie that we have to “fit in” in order to relate. In our attempt to become “relevant” we have lost “reverence”. The culture and all of its corruption is

dictating to the Church how and what it should be. We have become as Jesus warned in the previous verses, “If the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”

This should be of dire concern to everyone that considers him or herself a “Christian” a “disciple/follower” of Jesus Christ. Be honest! What affect are you having on the culture in which you live? What effect is the culture having on you?

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