

Pass the Salt

Slide -

Where you are a Republican, Democrat, libertarian, an atheist or a Christian,

The general consensus is that you are not happy about what is happening in this country.

It doesn't matter what you are, nobody seems to be happy.

For example, the right is not happy because they feel that their values and their president are being trashed by the left

And their sympathizers by Hollywood and the media

And the left, they are angry because they believe the president and those who put him there in the White House are probably racists and haters at heart.

No one is cooperating and the divided nation seems to be drifting into ruin,

All cause by the other guys on the political spectrum, you know it always the other guys fault.

Christians of course feel this divisiveness and long to have a more peaceful and cooperative attitude among all political leaders

It seems however that this is a pipe dream when considering the antagonistic nature of our society today

People of faith observe the deep decline in regard to sexual morality, the waring nature of the political scene

And we wonder if there is anything to do to turn things around

And we get to a point of thinking, "How did we get this far down this road?"

Many times, we may feel disappointed and discouraged and dismayed,

thinking there is nothing a believer can do that can make a difference in this cynical and troubled world.

These times and these types of issues however are nothing new

Wars, rumors of wars, societies in decline, peoples rejection of God but often followed by a period of spiritual revival

These patterns and trends have repeated themselves throughout history,

And they will continue to do so until Jesus returns.

In all these times however, followers of Jesus have taught that their response to whatever the conditions of society can be reduced to two simple actions.

In other words when the society you live in or the family that you belong to,

Or the place where you work or study or serve is spinning out of control,

Slide - What should you as a Christian do?

1. Slide - Remain faithful

Whether the politicians are crazy, corrupt or dangerous, you remain faithful to Jesus Christ.

Whether the society you live in is at crisis or at war or at peace or full prosperity, you remain faithful to the Lord.

No matter what happens with the climate, with the economy, with your family, your health, your plans, your investments

you remain faithful to Jesus Christ.

The condition of the world, the society that you live in and the immediate family you belong to,

This is only the stage or backdrop against which the story of your life of faith is being played out.

These things are the context that help determine the quality of your faith.

Because Brothers and Sisters it always about faith.

And for this reason, we should realize our goal when considering the condition of the world at the time we happen to be living in it should be to remain faithful.

To remain faithful in a world at war

To remain faithful in a prosperous and peaceful world

To remain faithful in a rapidly changing world

To remain faithful in a politically divided world

Whatever the world I find myself in as a Christian we first find a way to remain faithful in that world.

The world may change but we don't change.

We must strive to remain faithful.

The second thing a Christian does in a world spinning downward in disbelief and the destruction that accompanies aggression and purposeful sinfulness.

2. Slide - Pass the Salt

Remaining faithful is what I do for myself in response to the condition of the world around me, whatever that might be.

Passing the salt is what I do to counter the debilitating effect that disbelief has on the world around me

How Christians can influence the spiritual tone of their surroundings and their need to do so.

Slide - Matthew 5:13 "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."

Jesus summarizes the effect that the unique Christian character and lifestyle has on the world by comparing them to salt.

Salt makes a difference, whether you use it in cooking or in any one of its industrial uses –

Jesus says that in like manner, Christians should make a difference.

The Lord emphasizes this point when He says that if salt were to lose its saltiness,

it would then be useless and not good for anything –

and in the same way if Christians do not maintain their standards or their work,

they too are not useful to God or to society.

Jesus wanted His disciples to flavor the world with the taste and presence of Christianity – this, He said could be done by a pure life and good works that the world could see and give God the glory for. In this context Christians today are called upon to be salt and make a difference in society. John Alexander, in an article in World Magazine suggests several ways this can be effectively done.

1. Slide - Salt Through Evangelism

The first and most obvious way is to season the world with the name and the message of Jesus Christ.

Our first priority as Christians is to live and talk in such a way that people are brought face to face with Christ and the gospel.

Jesus gave the great commission to the Apostles in

Slide - Matthew 28:18-20 “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

but guess what, the work did not end with them.

Each generation must find a way to spread the gospel to those who do not know it.

Yes there are people, even in this nation and this generation who do not know the Gospel.

We will not be judged on how well the Apostles and the first century church did this, or how well the church of Christ evangelized in the 50s.

The Floral City Church of Christ is responsible for your world, in your lifetime, with your resources and abilities.

Evangelism is not simply the job of missionaries or the ministers, it is the responsibility of each individual in the congregation.

The only difference is the manner in which we carry out our efforts to preach to the lost.

Jesus commands that we bring the gospel to all creation,

He leaves to our various skills and abilities how we do that.

For example, in this congregation

Some have skills and abilities at Bible correspondence courses

Some have skills and abilities to go on or support missions

Others have skills and abilities to preach, write or teach

Still others have skills and abilities to study one on one or invite people to church

Each way to salt the world with the gospel of Christ is good way.

The point to remember is that each person finds a way that suits him/her and begin passing the salting.

2. Slide - Salt Through Lifestyle

People may not want to hear you preach Christ to them or accompany you to church,

but they can always see Christ in you by the way you act and talk.

We can say we are salt but people usually reserve judgment about us until they've tasted our saltiness.

They may not like salt or use salt, but they know what it tastes like.

Christians who have lost their flavor of Christ because:

they are unfaithful in church attendance, they talk a pretty good game until asked about going to church

People who claim to know Christ, but they don't know God's word

they act and speak like non-believers and sinners;

and end up giving other people a bad taste in their mouths concerning Christianity

They don't like the salt.

People will be drawn to Christ and His gospel because they want the benefits of Christianity that they actually see in Christians life.

Benefits such as: Love, joy, peace, patience, self-control, faithfulness, wisdom, kindness, Godliness.

That's the definition of saltiness.

Christians are like those people who offer free samples at Costco –

we offer a taste of Christ and the quality of the flavor is based on the quality of our lives lived in obedience to Jesus.

If people like what they sample from us, they will love what they receive in knowing that God is who gives us our flavor.

I have said this before, when I was growing up, I started on a path to be atheistic.

Yes I went to the Methodist church but all they preached was current events and I got that in History class.

The main reason I went to church was to sing in the choir and meet girls.

And as the years went on the more self-center and materialist I became.

After all I graduated from the school of hard knocks, I was self-made.

And as that person, my drive was to acquire more and more wealth.

I excelled at jobs I had to maintain my drive.

After all I was striving for the American dream.

But the self-center, materialist existence became less and less gratifying.

The saying “the one with the most toys wins” was not true.

The whole I was trying to fill in my heart was still empty.

Brother Don Hastings though showed me the Christian saltiness.

We did things besides studying Gods word, I became like a younger brother to him.

And we did all the things that he and his father did together.

3. Slide - Salt Through Good Works

Of course, the most dynamic and pro-active way to flavor this world with the spirit of Christ is to do good works directly related to His name.

The early church gained a tremendous reputation when it began to save and care for babies who had been abandoned.

This was the ancient method of family planning as practiced by the pagan nations.

If the baby was deformed, ill or one girl too many, it would be left in a field to die.

The early church saw an opportunity to impact its society by taking in these unwanted children.

This type of charity was unheard of at the time and truly impressed the pagans who noticed Christianity for the first time because of this.

The church has a long history of good works in caring for the outcasts, the hopeless causes, the ones who could not pay back, the dirty jobs, the missions far off the beaten track.

I personally have always been impressed by and drawn to this type of salting in our society.

As a middle-aged man, in my 50's my step father made a big impression on me.

He was a very generous man.

To the unfortunate, to the church and to his family.

I asked him one time while visiting why he was so generous.

And he told about a man who inspired him greatly and after my own investigation, inspired me.

First off, my step father was raised a Catholic

As an adult, I do not agree with his theology, but I cannot dispute the dramatic effect of this man's witness.

The name of the man he talked about was Émile Léger.

He was the Cardinal of Quebec's Catholic Church.

As a Cardinal he had charge over 6 million French Canadian Catholics,

he sat on a committee of Cardinals from which the Pope was chosen.

He lived like a prince and had a limousine and dined with CEO's and powerful politicians.

Then one day he announced that he was giving up his duties in order to go to Africa and live among a leper colony in order to minister to them in the name of Christ.

The Pope did not want his to do this.

In order for Émile Léger to go to Africa he had to leave the Catholic church

He stayed in Africa for 20 years.

He never impressed me much when he lived in the ivory tower of the Catholic Church's hierarchy,

but when he left to live in a hut with the lepers - I was very impressed, very inspired.

We were inspired not by his position, but rather by his sacrifice in doing a good work.

God helped and inspired me to see the joy of the fruit of the spirit.

4. Slide - Salt Through Influence

For Christians living in a democracy there is another way to permeate our society with Christ's presence.

We have ballots, and freedom in elections which means we can make a difference by influencing government's power.

Government has done a mixed job of leading in this country.

We have a good system of defense, transportation, many valuable services that the government provides.

On the other hand, government has also removed the influence of God in school, law and government.

It has also made it easier to kill unborn children and contributed to the moral decline of our nation.

The Bible says that we should respect government;

Slide - Romans 13:1 "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God."

and pray for government;

Slide - I Timothy 2:1 "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence."

Maybe we in the church have forgotten the idea that God hears the prayers of the righteous

Slide - James 5:16 "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

and they can have a great effect not only for the sick, but for the sick government.

The Bible gives no instruction as far as being involved in politics is concerned but there are many examples of Godly people using their influence for the purpose of good:

Esther appealed to the king for her people

Cornelius built synagogues

Crispus lent his building for the teaching of the Gospel

In a democracy we have the opportunity to speak out for what we believe is right and so this gives Christians 2 opportunities to salt:

1. Slide - Christian men and women can run for office in order to influence the system from within.
2. Slide - Christians can affect the system from the outside by supporting candidates who promote Christian principles.

No government stands without God's permission,

but God often uses the influence of many people to lift up or tear down what pleases or displeases Him –

and that includes governments - can't influence if you don't vote.

We can salt with evangelism, lifestyle or good works every day but the opportunity to salt through influence only comes along every few years –

let's make sure we salt the ballot box too.

Summary

Some people think that the ultimate purpose in life is to taste as many delights that this world has to offer.

Their eyes are filled with desire, their god is their appetite, their life is simply a quest for satisfaction.

Jesus calls His followers to give the world the delightful taste of Christianity by flavoring it with:

Slide - The good news of salvation

The good example of holy living

The good works of mercy

The good influence of God's will

If you're not a Christian I call on you to give up your self-centered life and become the salt of Christ by repenting of your sins and being baptized today.

If you've lost your saltiness and would like to have your Christian flavor back come today acknowledging your faults so God can forgive, restore and use you to affect the world once again for Christ.

Whatever your need, don't let fear, pride or Satan hold you back from coming to the lord now and help pass the salt.

If you have any of these needs come now as we stand and sing a song of encouragement.

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