

Encounter Church
Sunday March 03, 2024

Salt and Light in a Shifting Culture
What's on Your Mind

Introduction: Our culture is shifting, if you haven't noticed. It depends on your worldview as to what you think about the shifting culture. If you have a Biblical Worldview you can see that we're getting further and further away from the Bible in Western Culture.

There is increasing antagonism toward the moral absolutes taught by Bible-believing churches.

Our culture is demonstrating a growing disdain for Christianity and core Christian beliefs.

The Washington, D.C.-based Family Research Council (FRC) released its annual Hostility Against Churches report recently, finding there were 436 hostile incidents against churches in 2023. This is more than double the number tracked in 2022 and more than eight times as many as the group found in 2018.

OUR CULTURE IS SHIFTING!

WHAT WOULD JESUS SAY TO US TODAY?

By the way, something you've never heard God say, "I didn't see that coming!" What would Jesus say to us today?

Matthew 5:13-16- ""You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."

Just before these verses we find "The Beatitudes." They describe the character of Kingdom of God citizens. The metaphors of "Salt" and "Light" describe the influence of Kingdom of God citizens on a secular society.

Mark 9:50- "Salt is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavor, how do you make it salty again? You must have the qualities of salt among yourselves and live in peace with each other."

Luke 14:34-35- "Salt is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavor, how do you make it salty again? Flavorless salt is good neither for the soil nor for the manure pile. It is thrown away. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!"

Father give us ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the church today!

As Children of God, Christ Ambassadors, representatives of the Kingdom of God, we are the SALT and LIGHT of the world!

God has no plan B! We are on this earth to make things better and brighter!

Ephesians 6:20- "I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should."

"I'm still the salt and light in this prison, in these chains. Oh and one more thing, pray that I will keep doing what got me put in this prison and these chains!"

FOR THIS SERIES WE'RE GOING TO BE LOOKING AT A PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE FROM THE BOOK OF ISAIAH.

Isaiah prophesied at the most crucial period in the history of Judah and Israel.

Notice the nation is divided! A southern kingdom and a northern kingdom.

Sound familiar. Our country is so divided right now. But here's the tragedy. ***The church is so divided right now!***

JUST A REMINDER: As Children of God we are part of ONE Kingdom. This Kingdom has a King. His name is Jesus. The Kingdom of God is not divided friends. The kingdoms of this world will be shaken but the Kingdom of God will never be shaken!

When the prophet Isaiah came on the scene Israel had succumbed to pagan worship! Judah had fallen into serious moral and spiritual decline.

Or in other words, they had been influenced by culture instead of them influencing the culture. They had become like the world around them!

The wealthy oppressed the poor. Women neglected their families in the quest of carnal pleasure. Many priests and prophets became drunken people pleasers.

It was clear they had violated the covenant recorded by Moses in the Book of Deuteronomy and captivity and judgement were inevitable for both Judah and Israel.

We'll be looking at a passage of scripture centered around the time God's children were to go into Assyrian captivity.

God's children are being invaded by a people that would continue to attempt to assimilate them into their culture.

THERE'S NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN! THE SAME THING HAPPENS TODAY.

HOW CAN WE BE SALT AND LIGHT IN THE SHIFTING CULTURE AROUND US?

Isaiah 8:11-22- "The Lord has given me a strong warning not to think like everyone else does. He said, "Don't call everything a conspiracy, like they do, and don't live in dread of what frightens them. Make the Lord of Heaven's Armies holy in your life. He is the one you should fear. He is the one who should make you tremble. He will keep you safe. But to Israel and Judah he will be a stone that makes people stumble, a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. Many will stumble and fall, never to rise again. They will be snared and captured." Preserve the teaching of God; entrust his instructions to those who follow me. I will wait for the Lord, who has turned away from the descendants of Jacob. I will put my hope in him. I and the children the Lord has given me serve as signs and warnings to Israel from the Lord of Heaven's Armies who dwells in his Temple on Mount Zion. Someone may say to you, "Let's ask the mediums and those who consult the spirits of the dead. With their whisperings and mutterings, they will tell us what to do." But shouldn't people ask God for guidance? Should the living seek guidance from the dead? Look to God's instructions and teachings! People who contradict his word are completely in the dark. They will go from one place to another, weary and hungry. And because they are hungry, they will rage and curse their king and their God. They will look up to heaven and down at the earth, but wherever they look, there will be trouble and anguish and dark despair. They will be thrown out into the darkness."

HOW CAN WE BE SALT AND LIGHT IN A SHIFTING CULTURE TODAY?

1. What's on Your Mind

"The Lord has given me a strong warning not to think like everyone else does."

WAIT A MINUTE! You mean I'm supposed to think different than the culture? YES!!!!

Many of us want to be children of God but we don't want to behave like children of God are supposed to!

Many of us want the benefits of the Kingdom of God but we don't want the responsibility of the Kingdom of God!

2 Corinthians 10:3-5- "We are human, but we don't wage war as humans do. We use God's mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps

people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.”

WHAT’S ON YOUR MIND?

“As a man thinks in his heart so is he.”

Philippians 4:8- “And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.”

Ken if you go around thinking like that verse says to think, then you’ve got your head in the sand.

NO, I’ve got my head in the Kingdom!

2 Timothy 1:7- “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.”

You have a spirit of power, love and a sound mind!

Isaiah 26:3- You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you!”

If you will fix your thoughts on God, God will fix your thoughts!

What’s on your mind? To be Salt and Light in a shifting culture.

2. Renew your Mind

“The Lord has given me a strong warning not to think like everyone else does.”

Romans 12:2- “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

A renewed mind is committed to the truths of the Kingdom of God!

Renewing your mind means interpreting life through the lens of God’s Word and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, rather than through the lens of your experience, woundedness, trauma, preferences, or the opinions of others.

Renewing your mind means doing away with unhealthy thought patterns and replacing them with true, godly ones.

You take notice of thoughts you have that don't line up with scripture, and when that thought comes up, choose not to keep thinking that thought.

Ephesians 4:22-23- “throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.”

We're called to be salt and light in this shifting culture. I have to ask myself, “What's on my mind?” Then I need to Renew my mind!

3. Make Up Your Mind

I have decided to follow Jesus! No turning back, no turning back!

Joshua 24:15- “But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”

I'VE MADE UP MY MIND! MY LIFE BELONGS TO GOD! IT'S NOT MINE! I'M GOING TO BE SALT AND LIGHT IN THIS GENERATION!

I'M GOING TO SERVE GOD'S PURPOSE FOR MY LIFE!

Colossians 3:1-4- “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.”

Even though the culture of this earth is shifting, you and I are a part of a Kingdom that will never change!

SOME OF US HAVE TOO MANY OPTIONS!

(Key Illustration)

CONCLUSION: Some of you here might need to Change Your Mind! Are you a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ?

What is the Holy Spirit saying to you though this message?

