

Cultural Barriers (Part 2)

I believe that to a large degree the church in America has come to a place where a person's adaptation to our church culture plays a major role in how we view that person's salvation experience with Jesus.

If we don't require conformity, we sometimes infer that if someone is going to be a Christian they must conform as much to our church culture, or our expectations, as they are to Jesus.

Like the Pharisees many of our practices are as much cultural and they are scriptural. After all that is how we experienced Christ.

We have to ask ourselves some very tough questions

We even have cultures within our culture and we struggle to accept each others culture. (music)

How people dress and other things that can become an affront to us seem to gain credence at times.

We need to appreciate each others culture

This is a struggle for young and old alike.

The Kingdom of God is not static nor is it restricted by our culture.

It can be restricted by us but Jesus is going to build His church.

Matthew 28:19 (NLT) Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Acts 1:8 (NLT) But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

We are sent to minister in the context of all cultures. God's only witnesses in those cultures are His children, and the world has no other way of knowing of Him except through the testimony of who we are.

do we love or despise the culture?

Wheel Graphic

The Challenge then is to become missional, the Apostle Paul understood it perfectly.

The Assemblies of God understands it perfectly, overseas.

It is much easier to be “missionminded” than it is to be “missional”

A Missional Theology - A church becomes missional when it remains faithful to the gospel and simultaneously seeks to contextualize the gospel (to the degree it can) so the gospel engages the worldview of its hearers.

A missional church is a church that is “on mission” in its setting

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NLT) Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ. **20** When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. **21** When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.

22 When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. **23** I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.

In verses 19-23 Paul lays out his desire to do what ever it takes to win the lost.

Matthew 5:13-16 (NLT) “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. **14** “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. **15** 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. **16** In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Jesus is talking in these verses about His desire for us to be a positive influence in our world, not conforming to it, but ministering to it.

We must simply be, ordinary individuals reaching into our neighborhoods.

Our opening video for this series has contained the following quote by Ian Thomas.

"I simply argue that the cross be raised again at the center of the market place as well as on the steeple of the church. I am recovering the claim that Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves; on the town garbage heap; at a cross road so cosmopolitan that they had to write His title in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek ...at the kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble. Because that is where He died and that is what he died about. And that is where churchmen ought to be, and what churchmen should be about."

We are called to minister to the world while being separated from its standards and ways. Sadly however, the church today is more influenced by the world than the world is by the church.

In both verse 13 and 14 you is emphatic. The idea is, "You are the only salt of the earth" and "You are the only light of the world."

The you in both cases is plural meaning Jesus intended the whole church to be salt and light.

The world is powerless to change itself, and we cannot influence the world for God when we are worldly ourselves.

We cannot give light to the world if we revert to places and ways of darkness ourselves.

We are not to reflect the world, but rather to influence it for Jesus, we are to be in it but not of it.

John 17:15-19 (NLT) I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. 16 They do not belong to this world any more than I do. 17 Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. 18 Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. 19 And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth.

We are having an influence on the world and our environment, one way or another, let's let it be the influence Jesus desires it to be.

We are to be this "Salt and Light" influence even in the midst of persecution or discomfort.

As Salt

"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 salt of the earth; - this indicates and communicates several things:

- 1) We are valuable to God, salt was a very valuable commodity, people were paid in salt, covenants were established with salt.
- 2) Salt flavors - we add a divine flavor to the world.
- 3) Salt stings in a wound. We may be used to prick the conscience of the world make it uncomfortable in the presence of God's holy Gospel.
- 4) Salt creates thirst.

But the primary characteristic Jesus emphasizes is preservation. Christians are a preserving influence in the world; the retard moral and spiritual spoilage.

As Christians and as temples of the Holy Spirit, and as salt, we represent God's presence in the earth. We as salt are to by the presence of God within us, prevent the world from degenerating even faster than it is.

We have a better way of life!

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."

This is used in the sense that salt cannot so much as become unsalty, but contamination can cause it to lose its value as salt. Its saltiness can no longer function.

Colossians 4:6 (NKJV) Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Seasoned with salt. Not insipid, not flat, not dull, not tasteless. Christians are to have an edge of liveliness, and to be marked by purity, wholesomeness, and hallowed pungency. **That ye may know ... answer**

every man. In order that we can adapt the message to the situation and speak appropriately to each and every man.

Containing antiseptic qualities, bringing healing words!

Luke 15:1 (NLT) Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach.

"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."

Jesus also called us to be light. "You are the light of the world." Whereas salt is unseen in its working, light is obvious. Salt works secretly, while light works openly. Salt works from within, light from without. Salt is a more indirect influence of the gospel, while light is more its direct communication. Salt works primarily through our living, while light works primarily through what we teach and preach. Salt is largely negative. It can retard corruption, but it cannot change corruption into incorruption. Light is more positive. It not only reveals what is wrong and false but helps produce what is righteous and true.

-- John Mac Arthur

We are to proclaim God's light in a world engulfed in darkness, just as Jesus came to do.

As a light on a hill should not be hidden or veiled, be sure that the light that Jesus has intended to shine through us is not veiled, masked or hidden by unrighteousness!

By nature and by its definition light must be visible to illuminate. We as Christians must be salt as an indirect influence, but also be direct and noticeable instruments of light.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

The purpose is to glorify God and reveal Jesus.

Andrew Murray lived an exceptionally holy life. Among those whom his influence was the greatest were his children and his grandchildren. Five of his

six sons became ministers of the Gospel and four of his daughters became minister's wives. Ten grandsons became ministers and thirteen grandchildren became missionaries.

Remember we cannot be an influence for purity in the world if we compromise our own purity.

It is not something we generate, but yielded to the Holy Spirit God does through us.

Luke 4:18-19 (NKJV) "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; 19 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."

1 Peter 3:15 (New Living Translation) Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.

Jesus Christ is the embodiment of this mission;
The Holy Spirit is the power of this mission;
The church is the instrument of this mission;
and
The culture is the context in which this mission occurs.

Becoming all things to all that we might win them through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Reaching