

Can the Church Regain Its Prophetic Voice?

"You are the salt of the earth." Most of us are familiar with these words.

They were spoken by Jesus to His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, pointing to our calling to be a moral conscience as well as a holy preservative to a society in decay. But are we as familiar with the Lord's warning that followed?

Jesus continued, "but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet" (Matt. 5:13).

This is exactly what has happened to the church of America in recent years. Because we have lost our saltiness, we have been scorned, discarded and ridiculed, almost literally "trampled under people's feet."

We who were called to be shining lights in the darkness, failed to shine.

We who were called to be prophetic voices to the world, failed to preach to ourselves.

We who were supposed to be different, proved to be just as corrupt and carnal and compromised as the rest.

We who were supposed to bring heaven's values down to earth, became as earthly as everyone else.

We were rocked by one major scandal after another.

We got caught up in partisan politics.

We were known better for our acrimony than for our love, for

our division rather than our unity, for our hypocrisy rather than our holiness. As a result, the name of our Lord has been mocked and many have left the church.

The good news is that God gives grace to the humble, and if we will get low before Him, confessing our sins, turning from the compromise and carnality in our own lives and seeking Him earnestly, He *will* answer from heaven.

He will have mercy. He will forgive and He will restore.

By His grace and mercy, we *can* regain our prophetic voice, but it will take patience. It will take perseverance. And it will take a real demonstration of our faith on a day by day, grassroots level.

In other words, it will take Christians living as Christians.

As Jesus said in the verses that immediately followed His words quoted above, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16).

As we let our light shine. As we do good deeds, helping those in our community in need. As we love our neighbors as ourselves. As we take a real interest in people's lives, they *will* take notice. They *will* recognize our sincerity. They *will* receive our help, and many *will* give glory to our Father. (Those of you have been living like this for years know that this is true.)

And from that stance of loving service we can regain our footing in the society, especially if we are able to avoid another wave of massive scandals.

Let us be known for our integrity, and our solid marriages and

families. Our kindness, and our trustworthiness.

As we are, our voices will be heard more and more, not as the claptrap of religious hypocrites, but as the trumpet blast of a moral conscience that cuts to the heart.

In fact, I believe that the stage has been set by God Himself, as millions of Americans struggle with uncertainty and fear, from the trauma and devastation of COVID to the current economic turndown. What is coming next?

Millions of Americans also recognize that our society is losing its mind, with the government fighting for boys to share locker rooms with girls and compete against them in sports, and with leading figures unable to define what is a woman. What in the world is going on?

This is where we step in with a message of hope, comfort, truth and eternal life. This is where we tell people there is a better way—God's way. This is where we urge people to turn away from that which is wrong, and turn to the only One who can set things right.

This is where we preach the gospel and live the gospel.

Now is also the perfect time to show that we have learned our lessons from past elections, and that we will not get obsessed with partisan politics to the point of our social media pages sounding like the latest TV attack ads. (In this context, I would encourage you to check out my newest book, due out shortly, *The Political Seduction of the Church: How Millions Of American Christians Have Confused Politics with the Gospel*—but I warn you in advance: this book does not tickle ears.)

God has called us to be different in the best sense of the word, to stand out as salt and light because of His grace at work in us. To the extent that we live out our faith in the days ahead, we can regain our voice. And somehow, even defying

nature, we can become salty again. {eo}

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