

Useless Salt?

I write this with a mixture of great sadness and optimism due to the current state of our nation, city and communities.

We are in crisis after crisis and it seems that, as South Africans, we are placing our heads in the sand like the proverbial ostrich. We think that by avoiding all these crises that they will magically disappear.

That is ok for people who have are pessimistic and have a fatalistic attitude...but not for us who claim to be the living embodiment of the Body of Christ on earth – that is the Church, or the people commonly known as Christians.

We are called to be different and to act and think differently. We are divinely called to be a part of the solution and not the problem! In Christ Jesus, we are new people who see hope in hopelessness, life in death and light in darkness!

If the Church, and by extension individual Christians, becomes negative and fearful, what prospects are there for those who are hopeless and desperate?

Maybe the Church has lost sight of its true identity and purpose by being distracted with popularity, power, money, meetings, attendance figures and social media exposure.

The Lord Jesus gives us this same warning in Matthew 5:13 (NKJV) “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”

I enjoy the Afrikaans version more, (AOV) “Julle is die sout van die aarde, maar as die sout laf geword het, waarmee sal dit gesout word? Dit deug nêrens meer voor as om buite gegooi en deur die mense vertrap te word nie.” “You are”... our identity is clear in the words of our Lord, we are salt! This leaves us with three challenges:

We do not add food to salt, we add salt to food!

This is exactly what a lot of the Church is doing today, adding food to the salt!

We are focused on inviting, encouraging and even luring and coaxing people to come to our church buildings. We create personalities, events, atmospheres, gimmicks and entertainment to see how many people we can draw to our buildings when we should actually be adding the salt to the food, which means the church going out into the community and into the homes and being visible and effective there first.

Secondly, the power of God and His Gospel is not necessarily needed in a church building on a Sunday. It is needed in the homes and surrounding communities where the devil is busy destroying lives.

It's easier to invite people to a building than to actually go to where they are and be challenged with their circumstances and problems. If God's people first go to the houses of the community, the community will come to God's house!

Secondly, “if the SALT loses its flavour” or as the Afrikaans wonderfully puts it “as die sout LAF geword het”. Many parts of the Church have become “laf” what with Doom, petrol, snakes, greed, and even “raising living people to life”!

In some quarters of society, we have become a circus and the laughing stock of the very community we are called to influence. The Lord Jesus goes on to explain what happens to a church that has lost its flavour. To quote Matthew 5:13 again, “it is then good for nothing.” Has the Church maybe become so good that all our goodness counts for nothing!

What is the value of some of our good programmes, meetings, sermons etc. when it comes to uplifting and reaching our communities? Most times nothing! Coincidentally, the Hebrew phrase “good for nothing” actually means “evil,” according to Proverbs 20:14. Food for thought!

Thirdly, “to be thrown out and to be trampled underfoot by men” – Who is throwing the salt out? Is it possible that the very communities we are called to serve don't want anything to do with the church? Is it possible that the Church has become so disconnected and ineffective that communities see no value in the church and what it does?

To be blunt, we have to ask why has the Church allowed itself to be thrown out of almost every area of influence in our communities e.g. schools, government, and families? Where the Church should be trampling upon evil works (Luke 10:19), parts of the Church are instead being being trampled upon!

Rays of light

I would like to conclude by declaring that it's not all doom and gloom concerning the Church in our nation and city. The Church is alive and well and will overcome these challenges.

I say this because Light always overcomes darkness according to John 1:5 and because too many people depend upon the Church becoming who we are and doing what we were originally called to do!

Also... I am part of the Church and I refuse to let my salt and light be wasted. Let us go out and once more touch and help people and families at grassroots level with empathy and love...that is being truly salty!

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