

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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Virtue Signaling

In today's culture, "virtue signaling" describes the act of making a public show of good behavior. Very often on social media, people virtue signal when they draw attention to their good and often politically correct behavior. So, rather than just living according to good moral principles, some really work to make sure others observe just how moral they are.

Jesus told the following parable in which one of two men were 'virtue signaling' by today's standards.

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:10-14 NKJV).

Did you notice that the Pharisee was extremely proud of himself? He talked to God about how wonderful he was, and about all the important things that he does on a regular basis. The tax collector recognized his position before God. He looked at himself from God's perspective, seeing himself as a lowly sinner in a lost and undone condition. Jesus stated that the tax collector was justified in the sight of God and not the self-righteous Pharisee who boasted about all his virtues.

Long before social media existed, Jesus warned,

"Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven... But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" (Matthew 6:1, 3 NKJV).

We ought not to get caught up trying to show others how great we are to "be seen by men." If that's our goal, then Jesus would say, "they have their reward." (Matthew 6:5 NKJV).

Our aim should be ". . . that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence." (1 Timothy 2:2). In doing this we will have a good influence on others as we "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16 NKJV). The goal is not to impress others with our religion, but to live in such a way that God is glorified.

In the end, God sees past the outward 'signal.' "For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7 NKJV). If our service is genuine, then it will please Him, even if no one else notices.

- Josh McCord

The Sad Effects of Fake Churches

"If therefore the whole church be come together into one place, and all speak with tongues, and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers, will they not say that ye are mad?" (1 Corinthians 14:23).

Today an article in the Financial Times by Tanjil Rashid entitled "Finding their religion: why Gen Z are turning to faith" posed the following question, "As spiritual belief shows signs of a quiet revival in Britain, has Christianity regained the underground appeal of its earliest days?" The article is very interesting in the observations it makes about the decline of religion in modern times. Observers have described the 21st century as an era of post Christianity. The decline in religion and falling attendance in churches has led to massive closures of many churches. This has been occurring in the United States, and Europe has seen this problem at a much higher level. Now, the pendulum of social change appears to be swinging in the opposite direction with the younger generation, at least in Britain. One of the interesting things noted in the article is one I have commented on before. Young people are turned off by what they believe are fake worship services. The article observes that what many young people have observed in modern worship services resembles a circus and is considered sickeningly fake. Churches that have instrumental music imitating a rock concert, people jumping around, waving their hands in the air, and people joyfully proclaiming their love for Jesus are viewed as shallow and carnal by a younger generation looking to fill their soul's spiritual needs. Many young people are struggling with the problems of this world and trying to find meaning for their lives. They are looking for quiet resolution to life's issues that true religion and God through His Word

provides. They are looking for places of worship which take their issues and spiritual matters seriously. They want their souls fed. They are not looking for food, fun, and frolic. They are disgusted with the entertaining environment found in many modern churches. Thank God we are finally seeing a new generation that is looking for spirituality in religion and is turned off by the foolishness into which many churches have digressed.

Young people and all people, please come worship and study with us each Sunday. If you are looking for a place that takes the Bible seriously and seeks to worship our God in a soul satisfying way that pleases God, then be our guest. You will not find entertainment. Nor will you find people looking to fill their fleshy desires at church services. Instead you will find a group simply following in the steps of our Lord worshipping and praising Him in the peaceful manner He desires of His disciples. Join us.

- Keith Hamilton

Clippings . . .

PARTYISM

Devotion to a group of people or to a building is not devotion to Christ. Some say, "Oh, I have been going there for years. All of my friends are there. They may teach and practice some things that are wrong, but I can't afford to leave." Such persons had rather offend the Lord than their friends.

- Jimmy Thomas, Gospel preacher (1932-2020)

Walking with the Lord God!

Moses wrote about people in the days preceding the Great Flood: "Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Genesis 6:5). What an appalling character of men is shown by God of the inhabitants of the world before the flood!

Wickedness! Men were engulfed in wickedness and evil to such an overwhelming degree that they could think of nothing else. They were wholly committed to living as reprobates, and that development and influence of corruption, that devotion to iniquity, was universal. Hearts of men, which form concepts and sprout ideas, became a poisoned fountain, flowing only with evil thoughts, purposes, desires and motives. Righteousness and devotion to God was extinct. Men had become devoid of any thought of good. There was no place for serious reflection on God, holiness, spirituality, or righteousness. Paul's

description was, "they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer" (Romans 1:28; see their specific actions in Romans 1:29-31).

This life! They were concerned only with the desires of the flesh and pursuing the things of this life. Jesus said, "they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." (Luke 17:27).

Punishment! The God who sees everything took notice of their hearts and actions, was displeased by them, and determined to indicate His disapproval to man by an unforgettable punishment! How great the evil must have been for God to say, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land . . . for I am sorry that I have made them." (Genesis 6:7)!

Are people like that today? Many people would be quite offended to be called atheists, but what are people when they live out the philosophy of atheism, when they do not "see fit to acknowledge God" by what they think and what they do? They may not speak the words, "There is no God!" but they live as if there is no God, as if they will never have to answer to Him for their evil thoughts and unrighteous actions. Others would be offended to be called materialists, but they live in a way that demonstrates the primary concerns of their hearts. Just as in the days of Noah, when people paid no attention to the warnings of the "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), people who have devoted themselves to such routines today will heed no warnings of an impending Judgment Day!

Must people be bad? "But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD." (Genesis 6:8). "Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God." (Genesis 6:9b). Noah is exemplary proof that a man can live righteously before God, even when surrounded by a society that is saturated with evil! When all others surrounding Noah lived as they pleased, giving no thought whatsoever to God and His righteousness, "By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." (Hebrews 11:7).

Noah walked with God! Noah did not embrace the ideas of the world around him. His standard for approval in life was not what everybody else was doing. He allowed no wickedness to consume his heart, but rather cultivated a trust in God and a belief in His warnings of world condemnation. He acted on the instructions of God for the saving of himself and his family, and God saw his faith and regarded him as righteous because of it.

Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord! Because of the choice that Noah made regarding who and what he would be in life, Noah found the grace of God. He determined to please God in faithful service to Him, even if he had to stand alone. His devout example shows us the way to God's favor.

Friend, you too can walk with God. How can we help you find and live in God's favor? Can we help you today?

- Gary Smalley

- * "There is nothing more buoyant than a rumor. It is easy to float one and hard to sink one!"
 - * "So many people think they are broad-minded just because they are too lazy to form a conviction!"
 - * "Hatred does more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to the object on which it is poured!"
 - * "The greatest of faults is to be conscious of none!"
 - * "It's good to have money and the things it can buy, but it's good too, to check up once in a while and make sure you haven't lost the things that money can't buy!"
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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

HEAR THE GOSPEL

(Romans 10:14-17; John 20:30-31; Romans 1:15-17)

BELIEVE IN JESUS CHRIST

(Acts 8:37; John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6)

REPENT OF PAST SINS

(Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30)

CONFESS CHRIST

(Romans 10:9-10; Acts 8:37)

BE BAPTIZED

(Romans 6:3-4; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Acts 8:36-39; 1 Peter 3:21)

LIVE A FAITHFUL LIFE

(Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-11; John 15:1-8; Hebrews 10:23-25)