

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

SHOES IN CHURCH

I showered and shaved...I adjusted my tie
 I got there and sat...in a pew just in time.
 Bowing my head in prayer...as I closed my eyes
 I saw the shoe of the man next to me...touching my own, I sighed.
 With plenty of room on either side...I thought, "why must our shoes touch?"
 It bothered me, his shoe touching mine...but it didn't bother him much.
 A prayer began: "Our Father"...I thought, this man with the shoes has no pride
 They're dusty, worn, and scratched...even worse, there are holes on the side!
 Thank you for blessings, the prayer went on, the shoe man said...a quiet "Amen."
 I tried to focus on the prayer...but my thoughts were on his shoes again.
 Aren't we supposed to look our best...when walking through that door?
 Well, this certainly isn't it, I thought, glancing toward the floor.
 The prayer was ended...and the songs of praise began.
 The shoe man was certainly loud...sounding proud as he sang.
 His voice lifted the rafters...his hands were raised high.
 The Lord could surely hear...the shoe man's voice from the sky.
 It was time for the offering...and what I threw in was steep.
 I watched as the shoe man reached...into his pockets so deep.
 I saw what was pulled out...what the shoe man put in.
 Then I heard a soft "clunk" as the silver hits tin.
 The sermon really bored me...to tears, and that's no lie.
 It was the same for the shoe man...for tears fell from his eyes.
 At the end of the service...as is the custom here
 We must greet new visitors...and show them good cheer.
 But I felt moved somehow...and wanted to meet the shoe man.
 So after the closing prayer...I reached over and shook his hand.
 He was old and his skin was dark...and his hair was truly a mess
 But I thanked him for coming...for being our guest.
 He said, "My name's Charlie...I'm glad to meet you, my friend."
 There were tears in his eyes...but he had a large, wide grin.
 "Let me explain, he said...wiping tears from his eyes.
 I've been coming here for months...and you're the first to say "Hi."
 I know my appearance...is not like the rest
 But I really do try...to always look my best.
 I always clean and polish my shoes...because my very long walk,
 But by the time I get here...they're dirty and dusty, like chalk.
 My heart filled with pain...and I swallowed to hide my tears
 As he continued to apologize...for daring to sit so near.
 He said, "When I get here...I know I must look a sight.
 But I thought, I if could touch you...then maybe our souls might unite."
 I was silent for a moment...knowing whatever was said
 Would pale in comparison...I spoke from my heart, not my head.
 Oh, you've touched me, I said...and taught me in part;
 That the best of any man...is what is found in his heart."
 The rest, I thought...this shoe man will never know.
 Like just how thankful I really am...that his dirty shoe touched my soul.

-Author Unknown

THREE TEARS FROM THE EYES OF THE SAVIOR

Text: _____

I. Jesus Cried Because of _____

Notes:

II. Jesus Cried Because of _____

Notes:

III. Jesus Cried Because of _____

Notes:

COUNTING THE COST OF CHRISTIANITY

Text: _____

I. It Costs Me My _____

Notes:

II. It Costs Me My _____

Notes:

III. It Costs Me My _____

Notes:

IF I SHOULD DIE...

“If I should die before I wake,” prayed young Tommy. “If I should die before I wake...If I should die.”

“Go on, Tommy,” urged his mother, “You know the rest of your prayer.”

“I’ll be back,” blurted the youngster.

Scrambling to his feet, he ran in to the next room. Soon he was back. Dropping to his knees, he rattled off the familiar bedtime prayer without a bobble.

Tucking little Tommy into bed, his mother issued a gentle rebuke for the interruption, insisting that he should think about what he was saying when he prayed.

“Mom, I was think about what I was saying,” said the boy defensively. “That’s why I had to stop. You see, I stood all of Ted’s wooden soldiers on their heads, just to see how mad he’d be in the morning. If I should die before I wake, I wouldn’t want him to find them that way, so I had to go and fix them the right way.”

“You’re right, dear,” said a happy mother, voice quivering. She thought of herself, and many other adults who should stop in the middle of their prayers and undo some wrong against another.

There are lots of things that may seem fun if you are going to keep on living. But you do not want them that way at the end.

THE PREACHER’S MOTHER

An elderly woman walked into the local country church. A friendly usher greeted her at the door and helped her up the flight of steps.

“Where would you like to sit?” he asked.

“The front row please,” she answered.

“You really don’t want to do that,” the usher said. “The preacher is really boring.”

“Do you happen to know who I am?” asked the woman.

“No,” said the usher.

“I’m the preacher’s mother,” she replied indignantly.

“Do you know who I am?” the usher asked.

“No,” she said.

“Good,” he said as he disappeared into the crowd.

-Van Morris

IN THE TOILET

My son Zachary, 4, came screaming out of the bathroom to tell me he’d dropped his toothbrush in the toilet. So I fished it out and threw it in the garbage. Zachary stood there thinking for a moment, then ran to my bathroom and came out with my toothbrush.

He held it up and said with a charming smile, “We better throw this one out too them—it fell in the toilet a few days ago.”

HIDE IT UNDER A BUSHEL? WHY?

Anyone reared a Christian home likely has endearing songs from their childhood emblazoned in their minds and on their hearts that has in some way molded them into the type of people they are. How many children have been spurred to later Christian service from the militant “I’m in the Lord’s Army”? Who among us has not been touched by the timeless remembrance of God’s affection for man—“Jesus Loves Me”? And how many Christians young and old have not had their faith enlarged by the adamant anthem “This Little Christian Light of Mine”? The words of that song, based on Matthew 5:14-16, still encourage me when the weight of the world seems to press downward. It boldly states the necessity of taking the gospel “all around the neighborhood.” Its words stand in solid defense against allowing Satan to blow it out. But perhaps my favorite lyrics are those that reflect the unashamed declaration of New Testament Christianity by stating that it will not be hidden under a bushel, but allowed to shine brightly, boldly, and clearly to all those with whom we come in contact. Sadly the lives of many do not reflect the pride that we should have in our relationship with God and knowledge of His word. Rather many lives reflect shame, doubt, and fear associated with the gospel’s free course throughout and into the world. Why? What is the root of those derogatory emotions directed toward Christianity? How could anyone who has tasted of the blessings found in Christ ever have doubts about their desire for others to hear about and experience the same? Hide it under a bushel? Why?

I suppose a number of Christians might feel justified in restricting the gospel because of personal insecurities. For generations a common excuse readily affirmed when asked why they are not more active in reaching the lost is “I just don’t know enough.” It is true that we do not need to enter battle unarmed. It must be wondered, though, why when that admission is made the individual does not then immediately begin to prepare themselves so they do know enough? Why is it that this excuse is the standard bearer of many for virtually their entire lives? The responsibility of every Christian is to “**be ready** to give an answer” (1 Peter 3:15); but we cannot be ready unless we get ready. It is one thing to admit a weakness in the area of Bible knowledge, but that should be the final time such a response is ever given. The Christian who truly desires the lost to be saved is going to prepare himself/herself to the “nth degree” to give an answer of the hope that is in us. Any personal insecurities we possess as Christians are our own fault, and never should be viewed as justification for what would better be described as a refusal to let our Christian lights shine.

A second reason some ignore their responsibility as Christians would probably be best described as doubt in the Divine. What is meant is the attitude that it is already known that those approached with the gospel will not be impacted anyway, so it is justified to save the effort and never try. The issues with such a mindset are troubling from two perspectives. One, such is an outright denial of the power of God’s word. Is it truly living and active, sharper than any two edged sword (Hebrews 4:12)? Does it actually contain all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3)? Will God really bring forth an increase (1 Corinthians 3:6)? If this attitude is maintained in the life of the inactive Christian, then their personal belief toward all questions above is “NO!” Second, this excuse prejudices the hearts of those never yet given the opportunity to change their lives. Would we desire to be judged similarly? Then the words of Matthew 7:1ff come to mind. Such is unrighteous judgment and should be avoided. Any acceptance or rejection of the gospel is a matter between an individual and God, but if we refuse to give them the chance to make that decision, we too will be held accountable (Ezekiel 3:20-24). Thus this doubt cannot be looked to as justification for not letting our Christian lights shine.

While others could be mentioned, a third supposed justification for the inactivity of some is likely a false sense of humility. Have you ever heard a person make the statement, “I don’t have any business telling somebody else how to live”? Yes, its true we should recognize our own weaknesses and closely guard ourselves against the principle of Matthew 7:3-5. However, we have the comfort of knowing that we are not telling anybody out of our own wisdom what needs to be done. When we teach someone the gospel, we are instructing them according to God’s wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:1-5). In fact, Paul closely guarded himself against this very insinuation when he emphasized the fact that the gospel he preached was not taught to him by any man, but came directly from God (Galatians 1:15-24). Therefore, this false humility can not and should not be used to excuse ourselves from letting our Christian lights shine.

No more fitting conclusion could be penned than the words of Jesus Himself: “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).