A Box Full of Surprises

Zanesville, OH | November 18, 2018 | Sermon Notes

**Foundational Scripture:** Matt. 5:14-16

**Intro**:

* Have you ever met someone, and you talked to them, got to know them and spent considerable time with this person? Over the course of this time, this individual has been known to tell dirty jokes, use obscene language, their drunk every other weekend, and they treat their spouse terribly. Well one day you’re talking to each other at lunch and this person says to you something along the lines of: *“Oh yeah I was raised a Christian. I’m a Christian and I believe in Jesus. I love Jesus.”* I imagine most would be shocked at what they were told. This person hasn’t been living in a way that would at all reflect Christ-like behavior. We have to be careful that **our lives as Christians isn’t a box full of surprises.** No one should be surprised when we say something like *“I’m a Christian”* if we have been actually living like one. The only reason your life as a Christian would be a box full of surprises is if you hid your lamp.

**Why do we hide our lamp?**

1. **Fear of what others might think**
   1. Many Christians fear that others (family, friends) will think less of them because they are a Christian. Some try to cover up the decision they have made, what they believe, what they do on Sundays etc. because of what others will say or do (cf. Jn. 12:42-42).
   2. I can’t be a Christian and be cool. Being *“cool”* isn’t cool if sin is what it takes to be *“cool.”* If you can’t be around your family or your friends because you refuse to partake in sin, that’s their loss (Prov. 29:25).
   3. Fitting in isn’t important when it requires you compromising God and His truth. Are you willing to forfeit your salvation and your hope because of what others think (cf. Matt. 16:26; 2 Tim. 4:10).
   4. Are you afraid to let others know where you stand on issues pertaining to sin and godliness? Would you rather coddle someone or save their souls? Are you fearful of what others will say if you stand for God and His truth? When the whole world around us praises what is evil and ridicules that which is good it can be easy to give in to the pressures of man (Isa. 5:20; 1 Jn. 2:15-17).
   5. We may not want to run the risk of being alienated from our social, political or professional circles. You won’t be missing out of anything. If you are labelled a religious nut and a crazy person because your loyalty lies with God and not man, then keep on serving God brethren!
2. **Fear of Persecution**
   1. This closely parallels the first point. Maybe you’re not worried about what someone will say but what they’ll do. What if someone brought out the sticks and stones? What would you do then?
   2. Are you fearful that if you speak up against homosexuality, fornication, adultery, drunkenness, licentiousness, modesty that they will label you as a racist, homophobic, bigot who is unloving and uncompassionate towards man because you won’t accept their views and beliefs? What if they take you to court and sue you for something? Would you denounce God and what you believe then (1 Pet. 3:13-17)?
   3. If someone threatened, you and your family because of your faith in God would you stop serving God? If your home was set on fire because you proclaim the bible as the objective truth able to make any man wise unto salvation, would you deny God and His word (Isa. 8:12-13; Matt. 10:28; Lk. 12:4-5; Acts 21:13; Rev. 2:10, 13)?
   4. It may be that we live in a country that allows us to worship freely and we don’t have to worry about this to a certain extent. But many of our brothers and sisters in Christ in other parts of this world deal with these things every day. Perhaps some of you will not see this kind of persecution in your life time but maybe your kids will or your grandkids.
3. **Fear of not knowing what to do** 
   1. Many Christians hide who they are because they just don’t know what to do. They are afraid they’ll say the wrong things or not say enough. They are afraid to serve, be hospitable, correct sin and evangelize because they say, *“Well, I don’t know what to do.”* Ignorance and limited abilities are not excuses (cf. Prov. 26:13-16; Matt. 25:14-15, 18-19, 24-30).
   2. It may be that we are ill-equipped because we aren’t studying our bibles enough (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We don’t pray enough and ask God to help us. We don’t ask our brothers and sisters to help us. If we don’t take advantage of all the opportunities like bible study and we start to cry wolf, then we have no one to blame but ourselves.
   3. As a Christian we can’t be afraid to show who we are and who lives in us because we can’t preach well or quote all the scriptures etc. 1 Pet. 3:15 wasn’t just for preachers or the spiritually elite but for ALL disciples.

**Let’s Not be Ashamed of Our Lord**

1. When people come to you, talk to you or interact with you they should not be shocked when you tell them you’re a Christian or you follow Jesus. Instead they should receive the very essence of Jesus:
   1. **Love** – (Matt. 5:43-44, 7:12; 22:39)
   2. **Compassion** – (Matt. 9:13; Lk. 6:36; 10:33; Jude 1:22-23)
   3. **Patience** – (1 Cor. 13:4; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Tim. 2:24)
   4. **Forgiveness** – (Matt. 6:14; 18:21-35; Lk. 17:3-4)
   5. **Service** – (Mk. 10:43-45; Jn. 13:14-15; Gal. 5:13)
   6. **Hospitality** – (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2; 1 Pet. 4:9)
   7. **Correction** – (Matt. 18:15-17; Jam. 5:19-20)
   8. **Evangelism** – (Matt. 28:20; Lk. 9:60; 1 Tim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 4:2)
2. If it be that we decide to hide our lamp and become a box full of surprises, then Jesus will have a surprise waiting for us on the day of judgment (cf. Matt. 10:32-33; Mk. 8:38).
3. The gospel is nothing to be ashamed of. God is no one to be ashamed of. Are you here today and are in need of God’s grace? Do you need His love and forgiveness? Do you have burdens you need to get rid of (Rom. 1:16-17)?