

*"You are the salt of the earth, 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."* Do those words sound familiar? Lately I have been preaching through the Gospel of Matthew. We are now in the Sermon on the Mount, and last week we came to Matt. 5:13, "You are the salt of the earth." As I pondered that verse in preparation for my sermon, I thought to myself, "boy, it sure feels like the church has been getting trampled on this year."

We have a flourishing, viny, leafy, green ivy plant in our living room. A while back my wife noticed some yellow leaves here and there on the plant. Imagine for a moment that upon finding these yellow leaves, my wife came to me and said, "dear, there are yellow leaves growing on that plant, we need to do something about that. Let's pass a household law forbidding yellow leaves, and any yellow leaves found will be disposed of!" Now my wife did not do that, but bear with me.

Or let's say she came to me and said, "dear, there are yellow leaves growing on our ivy plant. Even though those leaves weren't there before, I believe that if those leaves want to be yellow, then we should accept them as they are. It's okay for leaves to be yellow in this house." Or a third option, what if my wife came to me and said, "honey, there's a yellow leaf on our big green ivy plant. I believe the plant is dying and all hope is lost. Let's just throw it in the garbage."



Now none of those things are what my wife actually did. My wife is an intelligent person and upon a thorough investigation she determined that this plant was growing so well that it had outgrown the pot it was in and there wasn't enough soil in the pot to support the plant anymore. The plant simply needed a bigger pot. Though the leaves showed symptoms of something being wrong, the problem was in the roots.

As the Church in America seems to be struggling to influence the culture and world around us, and it increasingly feels like Christian values and morals are being trampled on, there have been a variety of responses from the Church. Some have said, "We need to be louder and bolder. We need to mobilize politically and fight back harder." Others have said, "The world is changing and we need to get with the times and accept people the way they are, that is how we will get our influence back." Still others have said, "Look at the signs! Globalism, socialism, state persecution, microchips in our heads, the end is near! The Rapture is upon us."

Yet is it possible, that the yellowing of our culture and society is simply a sign of a deeper problem. Even a problem in the Church? Did you know that around 65% of American's identify as Christians? And just 10 years ago that number was about 80%?<sup>1</sup> Here is another statistic for you, did you know that less than 5%

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<sup>1</sup> "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace," *Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project* (blog), October 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/10/17/in-u-s-decline-of-christianity-continues-at-rapid-pace/>.

of American's identify as LGBT?<sup>2</sup> Yet the impact of the LBGT movement on this country is enormous. 5% of Americans totally control the narrative around sexual and family norms. How is it possible that a 5% minority is manhandling a 65% majority? Why does the 65% majority even care what the 5% are saying?

As the Church in this country, and the western world at large, continues to be trampled underfoot by our societies, it is easy to point fingers. It is easy to get mad at the world, to capitulate to the world, or to despair at the world. What is not easy is to say that the Church has lost its salt. It is no longer effectively preserving the culture from decay (in the ancient world salt was primarily used as a preservative).<sup>3</sup>

Jesus says to look no further than the salt. Impure salt, defiled salt, tasteless salt, worthless salt is good for nothing other than to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. As the Western Church struggles against a world that is increasingly hostile towards it, my encouragement to you would be to stop focusing on yellow leaves, and start focusing on the root of the problem. My encouragement to you, as you wonder what small, little me can do against the big problems in this big world, is to start with repentance and looking to Christ. Start with examining your own heart, your own life, and your own local Church. Repent of your sins. Confess them to God and man. Then look to Christ.

Sincerely,

*A Plaid Pastor*

*-by Pastor Josh Emmel, Faith Baptist Church, Kenmare, ND*

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<sup>2</sup> Gallup Inc, "In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%," Gallup.com, May 22, 2018, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/234863/estimate-lgbt-population-rises.aspx>.

<sup>3</sup> D.A. Carson, *Matthew*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010). Pg. 292