

Sometimes we Christians know how to ‘get’ saved, but we’re not so good at ‘being’ the saved.

Over the last month, we’ve been talking about “taking off the old self” and “putting on the new self” (Christ in us) – being renewed in Christ,,,, (when you become a Christian, you cannot stay the same as you once were). And so, disciples of Jesus will be different from people of the world...

And so, for Christians, it becomes an issue of, “How should I now relate to people of the world?” (Because I once **was** a person **of** the world, but I’m not anymore, and so I don’t feel like I belong in the world any more...)

And throughout the centuries, Christians have come to very different positions on this (and you will have noticed this yourself).

Some Christians, it’s hard to tell that they even are a Christian – they just blend right in with the rest of the world, and they don’t seem to be any different...

Some:

- go to the pubs & clubs and fit right in with the drunken culture;
- not fazed by rude jokes or leud behaviour;
- just as selfish;
- fixated on this life;
- dress in a way that says “Hey, I’m a sexual object – look at me”
- watch any movie (no matter how debased)
- sing along with any song (no matter how grotesque the lyrics)

- are really open to the social agenda of the world;
- don't have a problem with dating non-Christians;
- embrace social media, and become keyboard warriors who can be just as
 - hurtful;
 - spiteful;
 - slanderous &
 - condescendingas anyone else

- they fit right on in – just like the world....

But then other Christians, they withdraw themselves completely from the world. In the middle ages, they would form a cloister, where they'd get into their own little Christian commune – build a wall up to keep the world out; they'd farm their own food, and never have to blend with those pesky non-Christians... And the remnant is the scattered convents and monasteries, walled off from the world.

Today, Christians might shut themselves off from the world by:

- all of their friends are Christians;
- the only people they have over for dinner are Christians;
- Christian coffee shop
- Christian doctor;
- listen to Christian music;
- go to a Christian school
- work in a Christian workplace;
- only shop at Christian shops;
- only read Christian books;
- listen to the Christian radio;
- watch Christian television;

Now, none of those things are bad things,, unless they're shutting us off from the world... The temptation is, to retreat into our familiar, secure Christian 'holy huddle'. But if we Christians isolate ourselves from the world, we won't have opportunities to either share Christ with the world, or to be Christ, as we serve Christ in the world...

What did Jesus do?

Our Lord, is not someone who shut Himself off from the world. And the religious leaders of the day criticised Him for that... The Pharisees were known as "the separated ones", and they frowned at Jesus, (Oh, He hangs out with tax-collectors and prostitutes)... I'm not sure too many of us would be accused of that...

Jesus explained His actions – it's the sick who need the doctor. And you know what – this hasn't changed. And today, it's the sinners who need a Saviour. And one of the final commands Jesus gave His disciples, was to "Go into all of the world"...

OK, so how are we to relate to people of the world???

If we've taken off the old self, and put on the new self, and are being renewed in Christ, how do we now, relate to the world???

Well, this is offensive to the world, and it may even be offensive to some Christians, but Paul is very clear – "unbelievers", he refers to as "outsiders", and they are. The

Greek word he uses is ἔξω (exō) (those who are without – stand outside). And sometimes I think the Christian church are too apologetic about this. Christians and non-Christians are different – as different as:

- night is to day;
- light is from darkness;
- holiness is to the profane...

Now, it's really hard to say that, without appearing 'up ourselves' or 'elitist', and it truly is offensive, to talk about "insiders" and "outsiders"...

But let us never forget, the reason that we're insiders, is not because we are so wonderful – we're no longer 'outsiders' because our God has graciously revealed Himself and brought us in...

To move from the outside to the inside, is to have the mystery of Christ revealed. And in this letter, Paul's talked about the Mystery of Christ a couple of times already...

Right, so let's nail this down:

There are 2 kingdoms – the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light – the kingdom of Christ and the kingdom of this world... And those who haven't received Jesus as their Lord, are His enemies (outsiders – not in the Kingdom)...

And on the Day of Judgment, there will be 2 groups of people – those who are saved (and enter into His glory), and those who are not saved, (who will enter into judgment). And until

we understand this – we’re not going to understand the imperative of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to unbelievers who Jesus loves, but are not yet saved...

I don’t care who is offended by this – the Scriptures are clear: from the Christian perspective, “unbelievers are outsiders”... But because we’ve taken off self, and we’re being transformed in Christ, we love every outsider so much, we will go to great lengths – put ourselves at great danger and discomfort, to reveal the mystery of Christ to all ‘outsiders’, so that they too, can come to know Christ, and be saved, in the way that we have been saved.

Now the thing is, while the binary nature of saved/unsaved – insiders/outside is offensive, sometimes Christians are deliberately extra-offensive in the way they relate to non-Christians...

Paul will have none of that, and we’ll get to that shortly. Let’s begin at v5

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

Do you know why Jesus hasn’t returned yet? 2 Peter 3:9, tells us – It’s His patience – He’s giving people time to repent...

Now, Paul’s been talking about prayer – Pray that:

- God would open up a door for the word;
- we can declare the mystery of Christ;
- we can make it clear...

Now, do we stop at prayer? No way. **Do what you pray...**

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.

If in God's wisdom, He's giving outsiders time to repent, for us to walk in God's wisdom, how do **we** use this time??? By declaring the mysteries of Christ...

Time... Who wishes they had more time???

10 080. – that's how many minutes I have this week. How many minutes did I have last week? 10 080. How many minutes do **you** have this week? 10 080... How many minutes did you have last week? 10 080.

How many of those 10 080 minutes, did we spend, declaring the mysteries of Christ (not to each other), but to outsiders???

How many of that 10 080 minutes did I spend:

- at work;
- reading a magazine;
- enjoying my family;
- watching the tv;
- worrying:
 - covid;
 - vaccines;
 - Government mandates;
 - finances;
 - weather;
- social media:

- reading rot;
- giving my opinions;
- liking funny cat videos (apparently it's a thing)

How many of those 10 080 minutes, did we spend:

- visiting the sick;
- consoling the heart-broken; and
- declaring the mystery of Christ to outsiders???

We all have the same amount of time.

In my field-year during Bible College, I arranged to spend some time with prison chaplains in jails. I didn't get as much time as I'd hoped, but I got a day in Woodford Maximum security & a day at Palin Creek Prison farm...

And I was surprised at just how open most of the inmates were, to spend time talking to a prison chaplain. You see, we live in a time-poor culture. We fill our day up with so many activities, and so many things we want to cram in to do and see, we have no time to just sit and be with people...

But in a prison, they are time-rich. They have nothing but time. In fact, it's called "doing time" ...

And as Christians, like most of the world, most of us, have made ourselves time-poor.

When Paul says **making the best use of the time**, in the Greek, he's actually using a marketing term, meaning "buy

back” the time you have “regain” the time – “reclaim” the time....

10 080 minutes in the week: regain/reclaim some of that time, to use for the wisdom of God – to share Christ with outsiders...

I'm a task-focused person. When I start a task, I don't really want to stop until I'm finished. And that's doubly so, when I'm doing contract work for someone... So I might set a certain number of hours/days aside, to get a job done... And I'll start early in the morning, to make the best use of my time for work...

But then the client says, “We're having smoko. Come in and have smoko with us.”... Michael doesn't stop for smoko. And he'll eat his lunch in 10min and keep going (and grease the machine at the same time)...

But I learned a long time ago, that for me to make the best use of God's time, no matter how much I wanted to keep working, I'd stop the clock, knowing I'm not going to earn any money for this 30min/hr/2hrs,,, but I'm going to take time in conversation with unbelievers/outsideers – and who knows – God might open a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ...

10 080 minutes – When there's an opportunity for the Gospel, drop everything – rearrange your day if you have to, to share the good news of Jesus.

But you might say to me, “But Michael, I can’t”... My reply: 10 080 – what’s your priorities with that 10 080?, and then tell me you can’t. You see, whatever the Lord has called you to:

- wage earner;
- business owner;
- contractor;
- student;
- professional;
- public servant;
- mother;
- father;
- grandparent;
- retiree;

Whatever God has called you to, in that roll/vocation that He has called you to, see it as an opportunity, to notice when God opens a door for the word. And use those opportunities.

Now, the trouble is, as I said earlier, even though the Gospel message is offensive to many – you’re either in or you’re out : “The wages of sin is death & judgment, but the good news is, believe in Jesus, repent of sin, and we receive life and salvation”... Alright, it’s good news, but to those who aren’t saved, it can be quite offensive...

But the trouble is, sometimes Christians seem to go out of their way to be extra offensive.

6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Have you ever noticed that some Christians have words of grace, while others have words of condemnation???

Now, I'm not talking about 'cheap grace' here, because 'cheap grace' is not grace at all... Do you know what I mean by cheap grace? – It's the message that says "Sin doesn't matter – just believe in Jesus and you'll be saved"... Sin does matter. It's abhorrent to God. It matters so much, that Jesus died, to purify us of sin... And so, we repent of sin – we turn away from it – we put off our old sinful self, and we become a new creation in Christ...

But when we share Christ, do we come across as being "condescending" or "gracious"?

I challenge you, look back over the emails you've written over the last month – was your speech always gracious? Or was it condescending?

Look back over your Facebook posts (or your chosen social media) – was your speech always gracious? or was it something else???

And let your speech always be **seasoned with salt** – that means "be interesting and be nice"

It's not very fashionable to put salt on your food these days, but if I don't eat a lot of salt, I get cramps. But more importantly, if I don't eat a lot of salt, my food tastes boring. I think there's only one food that doesn't taste better with extra salt, and that's vegemite... (in that case, you just add extra vegemite)...

Sharing the Gospel – sharing the good news of Jesus, isn't meant to be bland... That doesn't mean we make stuff up – there have been some evangelists who have been exposed as being frauds in their testimony... *When I was a young fella, there was a comedian by the name of "Mike Warnke", who told his testimony – it was amazing, and funny, about how he used to be a satanic high priest before he was converted... And years later, it was exposed – that much of it was a lie... He wasn't seasoning it with salt – he embellished his testimony with lies...*

But let your speech always be gracious, interesting, and nice – flavoursome...

What Christ has done for you is exciting – share why you're filled with joy...

You know, I look around me at the moment, and all the world will see, (of some Christians) is a whole bunch of angry Christians, cranky about this/that/other, and how bad the world is, and how bad this/that is, and that's what consumes them...

and their speech isn't gracious at all; and it's not seasoned – it's distasteful...

But why??? Why should our **speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt**

so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Something I've noticed with all of the Apostles, is the Gospel message was the same, but the way that message was communicated with outsiders, was different in every situation¹...

Effective evangelism isn't about having a set evangelism routine that's going to work in every circumstance. It's about gracious, interesting, 'nice' conversation, that leads to questions about Christ. Not everyone needs the same answers...

When he says "**so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.**", sometimes we'll be giving answers to questions (seeking Christ). Sometimes we'll be giving answers to accusations – to somebody who's against Christ... Even so, let's make sure our speech is always gracious and kind.

10 080 minutes. What did we just use? About 35 of those 10 080 minutes listening to this message... What are we going to do with the other 10 045 minutes???

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

Let's pray:

Lord,
Open to us, a door for the word,
to declare the mystery of Christ,
that we would make it clear;
that we would speak, how we ought to speak;

That we would buy-back;
that we would reclaim,
the time that You've given us,
to share Christ with outsiders.

Lord, give us a love for the people of this world,
as You love the people of this world.

And help us, as we share Christ,
and not only when we share Christ,
in all of our conversations with outsiders,
may our speech always be gracious,
always seasoned, tasty, interesting, nice,

so that we wouldn't turn people off of you,
but that we would answer them,
with the grace and love of Christ Himself,

And may Christ be glorified in us;
and may outsiders be drawn to Christ through us,

Amen.

ⁱ 1Cor 9:18