

“Be Contagious”

The Rev. S. Shane Nanney ~ January 5, 2025

Ephesians 1:3-14 and John 1:10-18

Remember when we were kids how our mom used to tell us that we could catch a cold if we went outside without our coats and hats and got too cold or especially if we got our heads wet?

Truth is, germs, not cold weather, cause colds. The reason we catch more colds in the cold winter weather is because we're indoors more and in closer quarters with other people and their germs.

Research shows that the most common way to get a cold is from someone who has a cold, sneezes on his hands, and then shakes yours.

Germs are contagious. Germs are the agents that transmit colds and viruses.

Now why do I bring this up? Because we are called to "Be Contagious" Christians.

One of our major purposes as Christ followers is to infect others with the love of God that we have in our hearts and lives. We want to influence them in positive ways that will make them want to know Christ. We want to transmit God's love to their lives so that they too can enjoy knowing God.

"A church is considered evangelistically effective if just 1 person in 20 in that church leads a person to Christ in a year. This would mean that a church of 100 people would see five people come to Christ in their ministry in one year if they were evangelistically effective. Based on this theory, only 3.5% of U.S. churches are evangelistically effective."

What makes a church contagious? What makes them evangelistically effective? What makes a church one of the 3 1/2 out of one hundred?"

Basically, they needed to be reminded how rich they were in Christ. That's the theme to the Ephesian church letter - how rich Christ followers are, having made the decision to commit their lives to Jesus. When you want to be reminded of how rich you are in Christ this is one of the places in the Bible that you can turn to.

No one is richer than the person who has experienced God's grace! No one has more to offer!

Today we want to look at our spiritual blessings and see them as "Germs that Make Us Contagious." These are the things that we have "in Christ" that we ought to accentuate, the things that make us optimistic, these are the germs we want to infect others with. These are the spiritual blessings we ought to share with others! One of the most important is Holiness.

HOLINESS (Verse 4)

"In Christ, he chose us before the world was made so that we would be his holy people, people without blame before him." (Eph. 1:4)

The word "holy" used here means "to be separated from sin and consecrated to God," which are two sides to the same coin. When a person commits his or her life to Christ, they have a new attitude about sin and this new attitude affects the way they live.

I know what some of you are thinking. "Holiness doesn't sound like something that would make someone want to come to Christ." But contrary to what a lot of people think, it's not holiness that turns people off. It's "holier-than-thou-ness" that people reject. The truth is true biblical holiness is a very attractive quality!

Holiness represents positive change! Holiness is wholeness, and people all around us are looking for positive change. They're looking for wholeness in their broken lives.

For the average person under age forty:

- * One (or even two) out of six women you talk to will have been sexually molested.
- * Most men will have struggled with pornography or serious problems with lust.
- * One in ten people will struggle with substance abuse.
- * Also, it is estimated that as many as 34 million people have grown up in alcoholic homes.

That's just the tip of the iceberg of brokenness in our culture and it ought to break our hearts that people's lives around us are so full of pain.

Do you realize what holiness does? It offers help and hope and healing from the things we have done to ourselves because of our sin and the things that others have done to us because of their sin.

The hurting and broken people all around us need the holiness and wholeness that we have "in Christ."

Pastor F. E. Marsh told that on one occasion he was preaching and urging upon his hearers the importance of confession of sin and wherever possible of restitution for wrongs done to others.

At the close of his sermon a young man, a member of the church, came up to him with a troubled look on his face. "Pastor," he explained, "you have put me in a sad fix. I have wronged another, and I am ashamed to confess it or to try to put it right. You see, I am a boat builder and the man I work for rejects Christianity. I have talked to him often about his need of Christ and urged him to come and hear you preach, but he scoffs and ridicules it all. Now, I have been guilty of something that, if I should acknowledge it to him, will ruin my testimony forever."

He then went on to say that some time earlier he started to build a boat for himself in his own yard. In this work copper nails are used because they do not rust in the water. These nails are quite expensive, and the young man had been carrying home quantities of them to use for the project. He knew it was stealing, but he tried to salve his conscience by telling himself that his employer had so many he would never miss them and besides he was not being paid all that he thought he deserved. But this sermon had brought him to face the fact that he was just a common thief, for whose dishonest actions there was no excuse.

"But," he said, "I cannot go to my boss and tell him what I have done or offer to pay for those I have used and return the rest. If I do, he will think I am just a hypocrite. And yet those copper nails are digging into my conscience and I know I'll never have peace until I put this matter right."

For weeks the struggle went on. Then one night he came to Dr. Marsh and exclaimed, "Pastor, I've settled for the copper nails and my conscience is relieved at last."

"What happened when you confessed to your employer what you had done?" asked the pastor.

"Oh," he answered, "he looked strangely at me, then exclaimed, 'George, I always did think you were just a hypocrite, but now I begin to feel there's something in this Christianity after all. Any religion that would make a dishonest workman come back and confess that he had been stealing copper nails and offer to settle for them, must be worth having.'"

Holiness is contagious!

When the church, and Christ followers in particular, become so contagious that the unchurched wonder what is inside of us that gives us holiness, favor with God, forgiveness, and a Powerful Friend, then we will be better able to share the Good News about our wonderful Savior, Jesus! Amen.