

Universal Outsider

A Disarming Tour of Your Heart

February 19, 2023

Today we're talking about our role as insiders ... to outsiders.

So the obvious opening question would be: **Are you an insider or an outsider?** Though I was torn between *that* and the much *less obvious* question: **How do you taste?** But, Paul writes:



We urge you, *brothers and sisters*, [i.e. *insiders*] to [love each other] more and more, *and* to make it your *ambition* to lead a quiet life: [i.e.] You should mind your own business ... *so that* your daily life may *win* the respect of *outsiders* – 1 Thessalonians 4:9-12 NIV



For what have I to do with judging *outsiders*? Is it not those *inside* the church whom you are to *judge*? God judges those *outside*. – 1 Corinthians 5:12-13 ESV



When I was eighteen, I went to California with two friends and a naughty plan. We took the Universal Studios tour and, when nobody was looking, ducked behind the amphitheater, changed into coveralls, held a couple hammers (to look like workers), and gave ourselves the best backlot tour ever! We explored the Munster's mansion, Beaver Cleaver's house, and warehouses filled with props and equipment. But after a few hours we noticed a lot of patrol cars cruising around. And teams of security guards searching the buildings. And cop cars blocking the exits. We were trapped! No escape. We couldn't make a move without being seen. So we walked to a squad car and asked for directions. This is the cop who hauled us in ... and this is the chief who *questioned* us. And this is where I learned that Universal City had an actual *police force*! They mainly wanted to know if we'd *vandalized* any property. Which we *hadn't*. Though the *hammers* needed some *explanation*. But once they *concluded* that we were *simply idiots*, they *released* us – which is when I asked the officers if I could take their pictures, further *confirming* their *conclusion*.

We asked what had tipped 'em off. And they said they'd received several calls about three guys **trying too hard to look like workers**. Turns out, **the real workers just look like regular people**. Well, don't look *now*, but *you're* surrounded. Can't *escape* it. A lot of people are patrolling your *home*, your *workplace*, and wherever you *hangout*, **trying to figure out if you're legit, authentic, and sincere, or just an undercover outsider trying to look the part**. You know, there's a way we could've achieved our goal with full approval: apply for a *job*! **Become an actual functioning member of the crew**. But we weren't interested in making a *legitimate team effort*. **We just wanted an outsider's artificial, superficial, shortcut.**

Which is sadly similar to something we can do with our *faith*, and *especially* our *place* in the body of Christ. But not *you*. Not *here*. Because, as the Apostle Paul put it:



We are *not*, as so many, *peddling* the Word of God; but as of *sincerity*, but as *from God*, we speak in the *sight of God* in *Christ*. ... Clearly *you* are an *epistle* [i.e. a letter] of Christ ... written *not* with *ink* but by the Spirit of the *living God*, not on tablets of *stone* but on tablets of *flesh*, that is, of the *heart*. – 2 Corinthians 2:17; 3:3 NKJ



And you can't *fake that*. Cuz *onlookers guard their hearts, and patrol for pretenders*. It's *universal*. Try to tell 'em you've found the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*, and they'll say, "Yeah. *You* and everyone *else*." Cuz *talk is cheap and there's a lot of bad eggs*. That's another *universal truth* in this world. So, as a *sincere insider*, you need to:



Be *wise* in the way you *act* toward *outsiders*; [and] make the *most of every opportunity*. – Colossians 4:5 NIV



"To accomplish *what*, exactly?" *Mostly to intentionally provide an opportunity to allow* them to:

Taste and see that the Lord is good – Psalm 34:8 NIV

So, *how do you taste?* Hopefully like an honest-to-goodness *insider*. A *good egg*. Because *you are the letter the Lord is writing to those around you, that He's reaching out to*. You're it.

"Would you give [your son] a scorpion when he asks for an *egg*? Bad as you *are*, you *know* how to give *good things* ... how much *more*, then, will *the Father*" – Luke 11:11-13 GNT

[But] Is there any *taste* in the white of an *egg*? [Not much] – Job 6:6b NKJ

[And] Can *flavorless food* be eaten without *salt*? [Not satisfyingly] – Job 6:6a NKJ

[Well] "*You are the salt of the earth*" – Matthew 5:13 NKJ

[So] "*Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another*." – Mark 9:50 NKJ

[For] "*Salt is good; but if salt has lost its taste ... it is fit neither for the soil [which, in the parable of The Sower, symbolizes our heart, wherein God's Word is planted] nor for the manure pile; they [on the receiving end, just] throw it away*." – Luke 14:34-35 NRS

Cuz outsiders can tell the difference between well-seasoned words of *life*, and b.s.

[So] Be *wise* in the way you *act* toward *outsiders*; make the most of *every opportunity*. [How?] Let your *conversation* be *always full of grace*, [i.e.] *seasoned with salt*, so that you may know [not necessarily *what*, but] *how to answer everyone*. – Colossians 4:2-6 NIV

For the *ear tests words* as the *tongue tastes food*. – Job 34:3 NIV

So put away all *malice* and all *deceit* and *hypocrisy* and *envy* and all *slander* ... grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. – 1 Peter 2:1-3 ESV

... and have tasted the *goodness* of the Word of God – Hebrews 6:5 ESV

When we come together on Sunday morning, it's more than just a time of *celebration*, and *worship*, and *teaching*. **If we're "growing up" we're creating a loving, caring, family feeling.**

Stretching out His hand toward His disciples, [Jesus] said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, which is to be like His Son on earth] he is My brother and sister and mother." – Matthew 12:49-50 NAS



When people visit here it should feel like home, **due to the collective effect of what each of us bring to the table.** And I *love* it when someone cases the place and comments on your *warmth* and *love* and *humor* and *humility*. **Cuz we're not peddling God's Word, we're living it.**



It's not a *fluke* that *humor* and *humility* come from the same root word. **Learn to laugh – especially at yourself – and you'll find others coming to you to be refreshed.** I've found that the more *seriously* we take the Lord, the *less* seriously we take *ourselves*. After all, as they say: **we're all here cuz we ain't all there!** And the more *formal* the *setting*, the more anxious the *onlookers*; and the *less* likely to *let down* their *guard*. Which is why **we need to be the antidote to formality.** Because:



Where the *Spirit* of the Lord is, there is *liberty*. – 2 Corinthians 3:17 NKJ

Stand fast therefore in the *liberty* by which Christ has *made* us *free*, and do not be entangled again with a *yoke* of bondage. [Pun intended] – Galatians 5:1 NKJ

[For you] have been *called* to *liberty*; only do not use *liberty* as an *opportunity* for the *flesh*, but through *love* [and liberty] *serve* one another. – Galatians 5:13 NKJ

For *this* is the will of God, that by doing *good* you may put to *silence* the *ignorance* of foolish men— as *free*, yet *not* using *liberty* as a cloak for *vice* – 1 Peter 2:15-16 NKJ

"Because [as Jesus declared in His own hometown church] [the Spirit of the Lord] has anointed Me to *preach* the *Gospel* ... to *heal* the *brokenhearted*, to proclaim *liberty* to the *captives* and ... to *set* at *liberty* those who are *oppressed*" – Luke 4:18 NKJ



And **that liberty disarms the universal defenses of those with closed hearts.** So, your *home*, your *car*, your *place* of work, your *school*, and your *wherever*, but *especially* your *church*, should be an *oasis* in this *parched* old world. Because our *Creator*, *Lord*, and *Savior* said:

"If anyone *thirsts*, let him *come* to Me and *drink*. [And] He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of *his heart* will flow rivers of *living water*." – John 7:37-39 NKJ

For out of the *abundance* of the *heart* the mouth *speaks*. – Matthew 12:34 NKJ

[And] *A healed tongue is a tree of life* – Proverbs 15:4 YLT

[Which is why] *A cheerful heart is good medicine* – Proverbs 17:22 NIV

Noah and I aren't into being called "pastor", so new folks often ask how they should refer to me. I like to say, "My *friends* call me Bruce." Then when they say, "O.K. Bruce," I say, "But I *prefer* pastor." Then when they say, "Sure pastor," I say, "You don't want to be my friend?" Then they leave the church. So I should stop doing that. We don't have a problem with the title of our vocation, just with believers *avoiding* their *responsibilities* by *projecting* 'em onto us. Jesus said:

"Don't ever let anyone call you 'Rabbi,' [to exalt you] for you have only *one Teacher*, and all of you are on the *same level* ... But those who *exalt* themselves will be *humbled*, and those who *humble* themselves will be *exalted*." – Matthew 23:8-12 NLT

A humble pastor was on his knees in his church praying, "O Lord, I'm nothing." A deacon saw him and joined in, "O Lord, I'm nothing." Then the janitor, humbled by the sight, joined them: "O Lord, I'm nothing." And the deacon whispers to the pastor, "Look who thinks *he's* nothing!"

The only time Jesus describes *Himself*, know what He says?

"*Learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart*" – Matthew 11:29 NIV

So, I'll see your pastor and raise you a priest! Because:

[Jesus] has made us [all] *kings* and *priests* to His God and Father – Revelation 1:6 NKJ

If this is your place of worship, then **this is your house, and you're the host**. Whether you want to admit it or not. **You might be a bad host – but you're still the host**. Onlookers and outsiders will only see Jesus to the degree that He can speak and act through *you*. You're *it*. I can only do so much up here yapping for 25 minutes. **The real test is how we all treat 'em when I'm not teaching**.

And don't look *now*, but some of 'em are in here, *right now*. *Watching*. Trying to get a read on the *room*. And **they're mostly looking at you, to see if the claims of Christ are true**. And Jesus promises to *speak* to their *heart*, if you'll *open your mouth*; and to *encourage* and *comfort* 'em, if you'll *approach* 'em; and to *clean* 'em up and *care* for 'em, if you'll *serve* 'em in some *small way*.



[Jesus] began to wash His disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around Him. ... [And said] "Now that I, your *Lord* and *Teacher*, have washed *your* feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have *set you an example*" – John 13:4-15 NIV

And it's not like He even asks for all that *much*. So, **if you're part of His body, you gotta take ownership**, in what He's doing *here* and *everywhere* you *live out your faith*. We're called to be a "living sacrifice", **which often means sacrificing comfort and shyness and fear of rejection**, in order to wrap that towel around your waste ... **and stop wasting your opportunities**.

Cuz *that's* how we *grow up* in our *salvation*.