

An Unserious Life

Just as bad fruit on a tree betrays the sickness within, America's media betray the true state of its modern culture.



Rembrandt, sketch for Emmaus supper

Whether influencing it toward an anticipated condition, or simply reflecting back the condition that already exists, the media—especially advertising—are usually in sync with their audience. So the “unseriousness” of our world today is played out every day, hour after hour, on radio, on television, on the ubiquitous online realm.

Interested in a new automobile? Do the commercials for new Toyotas tout the quality of their construction, the dependability of their brakes, the solid build of their engines and transmissions? No, the ads make much of the sound quality of their radios, and how one can program them by means of your favorite handheld device.

Looking for a new computer? Do you need one for writing your latest novel, calculating pages of spreadsheet data, or designing office buildings? Good luck with making your selection, for the adverts are only interested in spouting drivel about how their machines can be used for keeping in touch with your “friends” in the abyss known as social media. Real work? Nah. You want it for “liking” total strangers, and looking at weird pictures and videos before you pass them along to someone else, and for listening to music and watching the latest films.

We are living through decidedly unserious times. The Roaring Twenties had nothing on The Opiated Teens.

So what does this have to do with God?
Everything.

Try as we might to separate the two, to separate religion and faith from everything else in our lives, contemporary culture will inevitably invade and contaminate religion. The Christian faith was never meant to be isolated from the world; it was, from the beginning, meant to be salt and light to a darkened society.

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Matthew 5:13-16

But in this fallen world the influencing current invariably flows upstream rather than down. Instead of the church improving the society in which it dwells, society invades and corrupts the church. Instead of faith in Christ becoming something attractive and contagious, society infests the Christian faith

with its deadly contagion.

We can find fault with the trivialities of modern advertising—but the companies wouldn’t spend millions of dollars producing the ads if they didn’t work. So we are as guilty as they. And we can find fault with modern churches that teach trivialities rather than substance—but they draw thousands, so if filling the pews and filling the offering plate is their goal, it is working.

The blame, ultimately, falls on the individual—on you, and me. Can we be serious about our buying decisions, in spite of the siren song of media? And, far more importantly, will we be serious about our faith, our relationship with Father God and His Christ?

Will we, once and for all and in spite of the cultural rot taking place around and sometimes in our churches, begin to take God seriously?

Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?
Can a fig tree, my brethren, produce olives, or a vine produce figs?
Nor can salt water produce fresh.

James 3:11-12

To be continued...