



Why are you so happy? Why do you have so much fun in the name of Jesus? Could it be that you worship at the First Church of Terrible Times?

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. 2 Timothy 3:1 & 5a

The Christian church in the last days will be known for, among many terrible things, loving pleasure rather than God.

We see evidence of this truth everywhere. A quick glance at any church bulletin proves this point. Or go to church and just listen to the conversations. You will hear talk of movies, TV shows, computer games, and a multitude of discussions about future or past fun events. From special events to seminars, ministries promise fun to entice people to attend. How ironic to receive an invitation to attend a seminar on the topic of the last days and in the nice, colorful brochure it announces several golf courses, eating establishments, and numerous fun activities available.

While someone from our ministry took a cab to a recent event the driver happened to attend Bible college, preparing for ministry. He declared with zeal that God called him to a snow board ministry so that he could reach out to all the lost skiers. That way, he explained, he could do something fun yet serve the Lord.

The golden calf worship of fun fills a terrible times church. Just as Aaron allowed folly, so the church of the last days continues. They build a golden calf that allows fun and feasting, announcing that the next day will be a celebration unto the Lord, (Exodus 32:5).

From Christian concerts and youth events to serious talks about the anti-Christ, love for feasting and fun shouts aloud.

TICKET the Mournful

Again, what are you so happy about? If you are a strong Christian, full of wisdom, then your sorrow would be the greatest. As Ecclesiastes 1:18 declares, "For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief." Those most like Jesus in this world are full of the sorrows of Christ, (Isaiah 53:3). Like Paul, though he had the joy of Christ and not the fun of the world, sorrow filled his heart, (2 Corinthians 6:10). Jesus spoke clearly, those who laugh now will mourn and weep after the judgment of their lives.

Woe to you who laugh now,
for you will mourn and weep.
Luke 6:25b

There just isn't anything in this world to be happy about. Everything is about to come to a fiery end. Family, friends, fun, food, our loves and festivals soon will be judged and burned when the whole world burns up at the judgment day of God.

Then there is the matter of your salvation. You have probably responded to a wide gate gospel call, but those who work out their salvation with fear and trembling, who take sin seriously, and treasure the blood of Jesus will mourn over their wicked condition, (Philippians 2:12). Though filled with the peace and love of Christ they also mourn and groan over the convicted sin the Holy Spirit seeks to crucify in them. Those who do not walk daily in this are not being saved by Jesus. After all Jesus said,

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matthew 5:4

Crucifixion, having nails driven into the flesh of one's hands and feet, is not a fun matter. If your Jesus does not sober you up with moments of pain and suffering you are not being saved. Peter preaches to us that only those who suffer in their bodies are done with sin. Jesus came to deliver us from sin and a painful cross does that work.

Therefore, since Christ suffered in his body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God. 1 Peter 4:1-2

After all, the flesh, fun, loving pleasure and the judgment to come are no laughing matter.

As we just read, we can only do the will of God by first suffering in our body against sin. Jesus learned obedience from what He suffered and we too must learn this, (Hebrews 5:8). Please do not think for a moment that you can receive the Holy Spirit by any other method, for God only gives the Holy Spirit to those who obey Him, (Acts 5:32, Hebrews 5:9)





Whenever a church or event declares that they will have fun and the gospel at the same time you can be sure that you should not attend, for they have been polluted by the world.

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: ...to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27

The world promises a good time and the church, through idolatry of numbers and love of self, also offers just as good of a time. Indeed, today's church equates Jesus as making life in this world more fun and fulfilling. Examine the following scripture to easily see the false church of today.

The false church mouths off and boasts about the freedom of Christ, their accomplishments and how they are not under law or bondage.

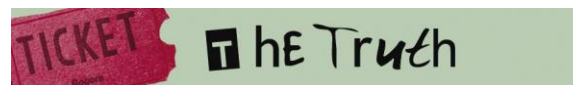
For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error. They promise them freedom, while they themselves are slaves of depravity—for a man is a slave to whatever has mastered him. 2 Peter 2:18-19

The church appeals to the desires of our flesh—fun, food, a good time, activity, and a better hope for this world. They attract those just starting to respond to Jesus, those just “escaping,” and lure them to their events. They “promise them freedom” but remain enslaved to the fun of the world. Freedom in Christ, for them, provides a way to enjoy the fun of the world without having to fear the righteous judgment of God. The true message of the cross, that crucifies and offends the flesh of man, has been lost in a flood of fun.

When we first started our current church everyone showed up with coffee mugs in hand, bringing in a supply of cookies and food. They had come from other churches where fun was never crucified. I didn't say a word about all of this but set out to preach the offensive message of the cross and watch the Holy Spirit lead. Without ever laying down a law those things sloughed off as the living Word was preached.

Whenever our church has events, seminars, or church meetings we never declare that we will have fun. Just as Jesus never said, “Come out with me to hear a sermon and watch me feed 5,000. Plenty of food, sun, and fun for everyone.” We would sin by mentioning any of the “fun” things that might take place. If someone attends the church or an event we hold, the matters that concern fun will just happen, for the cross keeps us from being engrossed in them.

What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. ...those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away. 1 Corinthians 7:29-31



It is easy enough to build a following if you mix in food, fun, and meet the basic worldly needs the world chases after. After all, who doesn't want to be out of debt, healthy, happy, and have a little fun? Many followed Jesus because he gave them health and food. The only difference between Jesus and the church today, is that Jesus rebuked those who followed Him for that reason.

Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. John 6:26

Never, ever would we say to a teen, “Come to an event because we will have lots of fun and activities.” Never would we announce an ice cream social Sunday or church picnic to bring others into church. In short, we do not preach fun, we preach Jesus Christ crucified. If people want to see their sin clearly, be forgiven, pick up their crosses, love the Truth, deny themselves and follow Jesus, then they should come. Anything less than that, then they should stay home.

One work of a pastor is to rebuke that part in every follower of Christ that seeks after Jesus because of the earthly things He provides. To love God, not for what one can get, but out of a selfless love. Such selflessness does not come naturally or easy to any man and therefore Jesus said that those who come after Him must hate their own lives, (John 12:25). This is not a matter of a pastor laying down a bunch of rules about not having fun, (Colossians 2:20-22). Rather, it is about helping the sheep of Christ deal, before God, with their love of the world. Like the rich, whom a preacher should command that they not look to their money but be generous, so too a true declarer of God’s Word will preach the narrow road, (1 Timothy 6:17).

A working of holiness, of being separate from the fun and pleasures of this world, is the true meaning of holiness. Not an easy task, but one that does require the pain of the cross as we enjoy all things God gives us in this world. As I hate my life, hating fun I want to have, I might for example, be sent by God, into an area that involves a lot of fun. But the motives and manner that happens is totally different from that of the world and the worldly church. Knowing full well that I am not entitled to any fun in this world, nor desiring, needing, or having to have one more fun thing to do because I have been crucified to the world, and the world to me.

May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Galatians 6:14

To keep oneself from being polluted by the world is pure religion to God, (James 1:12). A major source of pollution in the church is the fun of the world and the joking from the pulpit.



The blame for all of this sits squarely on the shoulders of preachers, teachers and youth leaders. After all, the one who can tell the most jokes, be the most entertaining and tell exciting stories while teaching is considered a good leader. However, in God’s eyes, only those who show the seriousness the cross of Christ demands are acceptable.

In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness... Titus 2:7

Or as the Greek declares, show gravity, which means a sense of heaviness and seriousness. After all, the flesh, fun, loving pleasure, sin and hell are no laughing matter.

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