

BEING LIGHTS IN THE WORLD Roger Shouse

Matthew 5:14
***“You are the light of the world.
A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.”***



A recent charity fundraiser in Kentucky auctioned autographed bottles of bourbon signed by Pope Francis. Kentucky, especially Louisville, is priding itself in being the bourbon capital of the world. As one walks through the airport, there are multiple signs advertising the different Kentucky strong drink.

A huge visitors drawing card is the Kentucky “Bourbon Trail” of distilleries, which allows a person to visit one brewery after another. Free samples are given, which is scary as one thinks about these people on the road driving after visiting so many different distilleries. But, what an odd combination, to have what is supposed to be a world religious leader, the pope, autographing bottles of very strong alcohol. One may argue about a glass of wine, which I think would be a losing argument, but bourbon is a powerfully strong drink. The pope’s signature on the bottles leaves the impression of approval and even recommendation of bourbon.

But there is a greater lesson closer to home of each of us to consider. How often do we see others placing a thumbs-up “like” or even “sharing” something from Facebook that contains offensive language or an inappropriate picture. Wouldn’t that also leave the impression of approval or even a recommendation?

All of this takes us to thoughts about influence. I find that influence is like a shadow. On a sunny, day, everyone has a shadow. Some are longer than others. Some are easier to see than others. But, good or bad, right or wrong, we all leave the shadows of influence.

In our verse today, Jesus tells the disciples that they are the light of the world. That’s what you are. It’s not that you need to become the light. Nor is it, you can become the light of the world. No. You are. And light attracts. The darker the setting, the brighter the light seems to be. Because you are the light, people notice. You stand out. You are different. You attract. Some may not like that aspect of discipleship. Some would rather blend in than stand out. But the call of our Lord is to be the light of the world.

Now, here are some thoughts:

First, those with critical eyes will try to read into things every little thing you do. Often, without having the total story, they will assume things and what they assume is quite often the worst. Rather than letting your actions speak for themselves, these critics become the spokesmen for you.

Second, people remember. I’ve had some come up to me and repeat something I said years ago. It helped them. I had completely forgotten, but they didn’t. And that’s the way influence

works. Long after our parents are on the other side, we can still be influenced by the way they thought and lived. When that is good, it is very comforting and helpful. It can keep us on course where we need to be. So, influence isn't always immediate. Most can remember a certain teacher, a coach, a neighborhood friend that was so meaningful to you. Their influence lives on long after we have moved away and moved on in our lives.

Third, godly influence is the best. Remembering those Bible class teachers when you were a child. Remembering the way one brother always worded his prayers. Remembering sitting with parents or grandparents during worship. Precious memories. Fond memories. But, more than that, godly influences that showed what was important and what made a difference.

If there be years from now, others will remember us. They'll remember the time we took to answer a question or came over to help them out. They'll remember your strong love for the Lord and your dedication to His word. It's that influence that has guided others. It's that influence that helped a congregation stay the course. It's that influence that led the next generation to walk faithfully with the Lord.

The pope's signature on a bottle of Kentucky bourbon. I can think of many better places to write your signature. How about in your child's or grandchild's Bible. How about on a notecard that you have mailed to encourage someone. How about at the end of a text thanking someone for helping you see a passage more clearly. How about on a check that you will give to the church.

Names attached...influence extended...those are important things. And, the name of God is upon us, as we walk with Him forever.