

The lesson today is entitled “Poke Holes in the Darkness.” *It is said of Robert Lewis Stevenson, famous author who wrote Treasure Island, that when he was a young boy he had a lot of health problems, including tuberculosis which caused breathing problems. One evening he was staring out his bedroom window. This was before the discovery of electricity and each night a man would have to go along the street and individually light each street light. His mother saw him staring out the window and said, “What are you doing looking out the window. You need to come away from the window before you catch a cold.” He continued staring out the window as she walked over to him and he said, “I’m watching the man poke holes in the darkness.”*

That’s what we are going to discuss today. Jesus came on the scene with the message, “*I am the light of the world*” and his followers were called TO BE lights in a dark world. How do we do that or maybe more importantly “Why do we need to do that?” Notice the following statistic. The world has a population of 7.8B people. As of January 1, 2024, the world's population was projected to be 8,02B, which is almost a 1% increase from the previous year. It is estimated that some 2/3 of that population (~5B) does not know who Jesus is. In the past forty years over a billion people have died who have never heard about Jesus and over 30M will die this year having never heard the message of salvation. It’s a dark world in which we live.

We are called to make a difference; to make a footprint in the sand. We are to be the light of the world. But how do we go about being that light? How do we make the impact because often when we speak people don’t listen; they are not interested. How do we poke holes in the darkness?

In 1 Peter 2:11-12, Peter helps us discover four priorities in poking holes in the darkness for Christ. Peter made an impact on people of the first century. Often in the sports you hear about impact players. That means that a player makes his presence known to both his teammates and the opposing player as well. Peter was an impact player, and he tells us some things that will make us impact players as well.

He begins by telling us to DISPLAY OUR CITIZENSHIP. *1 Peter 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.* He begins with “*beloved.*” He’s talking to fellow Christians; those of a spiritual kingdom. We are living on earth, but spiritually speaking we are not really citizens of the earth. He describes them as strangers (sojourners) and pilgrims. Both of these words in the Greek

language carry the idea of “*being beside.*” The Greek word for sojourner means to have a home nearby. They don’t have a house but instead live near a house. In the first century they lived in tents and travel from place to place.

Today there are a group of Christians that call themselves Sojourners. They live in RV’s and go from place to place living in RV parks while doing the Lord’s work. They may help build a building, they may canvas neighborhoods passing out information, they may assist in Vacation Bible Schools, etc. They are sojourners. They are not in a house, they are by a house.

Pilgrims are someone living by a city. They have not established residence yet. They are by the city, but not part of the city. These people don’t have roots planted anywhere. It’s like the song we sometimes sing:

*This world is not my home I'm just a passing through  
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue  
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door  
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.*

Hebrews 11:13 describes those who died in the faith as ***strangers and pilgrims on the earth.*** They were strangers; they were different from the world. The world should see us as different. We are to be sanctified. That word means we have been cleansed and ready for service. Have you ever been someplace and people hear you talk and say, “*You’re not from around here are you?*” They recognize a difference in your dialect. That’s the way we are to be as Christians. We are not from around here; our life should demonstrate that we are strangers and pilgrims and as such we poke a hole in the darkness. We don’t act the same as the world, we don’t talk like the world; we don’t go to some of the places that they world goes. Yet, many Christians are putting their roots in the world and are not strangers and pilgrims.

**Secondly,** Peter says we have to RESIST OUR FLESHLY DESIRES. If you want to poke holes in the darkness you have to not just say no to you fleshly desires and passions; you have to say “NEVER.” The word Peter uses is “*abstain.*” We live in a society today that fails to recognize abstinence. Instead it says, “*Do your own thing; be yourself; if it feels good do it.*” But if you follow God’s Biblical commands, there are some things you simply do not do. You have to make

the decision that there are some things of which you must abstain. We're not saying we want make mistakes along the way. We can read about David and if you were to ask him about adultery he would tell you not to go there because of all the pain it caused him and his family.

People try to rationalize satisfying their appetites by saying, "*That's just me; that is the way God made me; it's in my nature.*" But the Bible tells me in 1 Corinthians you can say no. ***1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*** Let us understand that we are called to ***abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.***

Ask Peter if it is better not to go there. He is writing these instructions to us because he knows what it is like to experience the garden when Jesus asked him to stay awake during his darkest hour. But Jesus comes back and finds him sleeping to which Jesus said the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. Now all of us have been there. But later that night Peter denied Jesus three times and even cursed in the process. Then there is that scene after his denials where Jesus looks eye to eye with Peter. Peter is writing to us and says do not give in to the flesh.

Notice what Paul says about this matter. ***Romans 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*** Paul says don't give any provisions for the flesh. Stay away from it. Abstain from it.

Turn over to Jeremiah 35 and let's notice the Rechabites. Probably some never remember reading about the Rechabites. They were a group of people because of their heritage who had taken a vow to abstain from certain things. In Jeremiah 35, the prophet was told to call the Rechabites and offer them wine. So they set up a table with buckets of wine available to the Rechabites and Jeremiah says enjoy. But the Rechabites refused. They said they had been given the charge not to drink any wine and they were not going to violate that vow. ***Jeremiah 35:6-7 But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever: (7) Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.*** Notice they say in v7 that they were

not to plant any roots in a place because they were to be “strangers.” Does that sound familiar? These people would not compromise their values and God uses them as an example for Judah to follow. We all have to fight our battles and we all struggle with the instruction by Peter saying abstain from fleshly lust. Sometimes we need to learn to say “never” and teach our children that there are some things they are “never to do.” You don’t have to get into the trash can to know there is trash there.

Thirdly, DEDICATE YOURSELF TO LIVING GOOD. *(12) Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.* Honest conversation means to live a good life. We are to live this good life among nonbelievers. Don’t live for the flesh but live for the spirit. Notice what Paul says in writing to Titus. *Titus 2:10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.* We are to live a life that “adorns the doctrine of God.” To adorn something means to enhance its beauty; make something look more attractive. People that are going to be before a television camera have make-up artist to adorn them; make them more attractive. Paul says we are to live our lives in such a way as to make doctrine of God more attractive. People should be able to look at our lives and they make the message of Jesus more attractive. This kind of life will poke holes in the darkness.

Fourthly, we need to STAY FOCUSED ON OUR MISSION. Our goal is to go to heaven and to take as many with us as we can. On the journey we should strive to glorify God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do it to the glory of God. Our text says *glorify God in the day of visitation.* **The day of visitation** may refer to when the Gentiles accept the gospel or it may refer to the final day so that if they have accepted the gospel, they will glorify God. Regardless, our mission is to get people to glorify God. Our mission is to teach the gospel and have people to respond by obeying the gospel message. Let us understand, when we walk out of the building we are entering a mission field. We are to be an influence for good; a light in a dark world. Jesus would say that we are to be the salt of the earth (*Matt. 5:13*); that’s influence for good.

*(14) Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. (15) Neither do men light a candle, and*

*put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. (16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.*

I want to close with one more statistic that is rather disturbing. 95% of all Christians have never won a soul for Jesus. Are we making an impact? Are we poking holes in the darkness? Try to imagine what it would be like if we could reduce that 95% down to 80%. Our building would be overflowing with new converts. If that number was reduced to 50%, wouldn't the world be a better place. If we want to poke holes in the darkness we need to follow the example set before us. *1 Peter 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

Maybe after doing some soul searching you realize that you need to make some changes in your life and/or lifestyle. Perhaps you see yourself as a 95%er. It's time to rededicate and get to work. Let us soar in 2024. Maybe you have never obeyed the gospel and become a Christian as outlined in scripture. Today is a good time to do that.

Invitation