

Culture Shock - Part 1

Welcome to the Twilight Zone

Matthew 24:1-14

Memory Verses: Romans 12:2, 1:16

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

In 2002, as a Senior in college, I got on a plane and flew across the world to the majestic land of India. I had been on a few cross-cultural mission trips but had never done it by myself. When I landed in Mumbai I started looking for my next flight to Visakhapatnam on the other side of the country. I couldn't find anything about it by looking at the monitors and I was having trouble finding anyone who spoke English. Eventually I found myself in a line of people leaving the airport. In a panic I tried to get out of the line but I was told in broken English that I was in the right line. And just as I suspected... the line left the airport. There I was, a stranger in a strange land, stranded outside an airport, couldn't speak the language, and having no idea what I was supposed to do next. I started to get dizzy... I thought I was about to pass out. I was in culture shock.

Google tells me that culture shock is defined as “the feeling of disorientation experienced by someone who is suddenly subjected to an unfamiliar culture, way of life, or set of attitudes.” It's the state of shocking realization that what you are experiencing is nothing like what you are expecting or are accustomed to. Some people experience cultural shock when they enter the home of a family they've just befriended, when they go to a new restaurant, or when they ride the subway for the first time in a big city. Every time my kids go over to a friend's house for the day or for a sleep over, we ask them what it was like and they always respond the same way... they do things a lot different over there. Of course they do... cause no one does it as good as the Sloane's. Yeah, right.. I wish. Of course they do it differently, and most likely better, because no one person does the same things as another person, and no one family does the same things as another family, just as no one church, city, state, or country has the exact same culture as another. We are diverse, we are different, and God planned it that way.

But there's another type of culture shock in our world today. One that doesn't deal with cultural diversity as much as it deals with common decency. One that is less about different languages and traditions and is more about different ideals and values. It is the byproduct of the culture war that has been raging in our country for the past 50 years, but recently has become all the more shocking. It's this hyper dosage of culture shock that many of us in this room have been experiencing since the beginning of 2020. 2020, the year that will go down in history as one of

the worst years of all time, no doubt. (Smell Meme Picture) Why? Number 1 on the list is Covid 19. 2020 is the year of lockdowns, quarantines, zoom meetings, government overreach, church closings, school closings, funeral cancellations, job losses, 6ft distancing, and masks... masks... masks. Regardless of how you feel about all these new regulations, one thing is clear... in order to get to where we are now, there has to have been a lot, and I mean a lot, of blind eyes turned as the constitution of the United States seems to have been completely and utterly ignored. Just a couple weeks ago a district court in California ruled that it was unconstitutional to keep churches in California from meeting together. Amazing... it only took 150 days for someone to realize that the first amendment gives every American the right to assemble together for worship! I'm in culture shock!

But amazingly and shockingly... Covid 19 is merely the tip of the iceberg when it comes to this bad dream we call 2020. On May 25th a black man in Minnesota died while in police custody and every night since, the cities of our country have been looted, vandalized, and burned by anarchists. These riots have caused the deaths of over 30 innocent people, many of them non-white, and some of them police officers. Thousands of businesses have been destroyed, hundreds of streets have been closed, and as of now over 3 billion dollars in property damage has been claimed making it the most expensive riot of all time by far. And that's not to mention the societal issues that have been aroused because of this. Race relations seem to be worse than they've been in a forty years. Police officer deaths are up more than 25% as anti-police rhetoric has reached an all time high. A marxist and anti-family organization called Black Lives Matters has taken over much of the social discourse as every athlete, and stadium in America dons BLM patches. And everyone who disagrees with any aspect of any of this has now been labeled a racist. We condemn racism. We actually truly want an end to systemic racism where it exists. We love our neighbors, co-workers, teammates, and schoolmates no matter what color they are and we are willing to do just about anything to prove it. But we also appreciate our police officers who put their lives on the line every single day to keep us safe. We want better training for our police officers to minimize shootings, but we also understand that they should have the right to do what they need to do to remain safe while on the job. We want to end racism in all of its forms and support the right of people to protest systems they disagree with, but we can't condone criminal vandalism, stealing, and arson. We believe that every single black life matters to an almighty God and to us... but we can't stand with an anti-god anti-American organization like Black Lives Matters! I'm in culture shock!

But wait... it gets worse. One of the core values of Black Lives Matters is the expansion of the Transgender agenda. On their website, under the section on what they believe, it says; “We are guided by the fact that all Black lives matter, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity,

gender identity, [or] gender expression... We make space for transgender brothers and sisters to participate and lead. We are self-reflexive and do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege and uplift Black trans folk." Why is an organization that is supposed to be fighting against the civil injustices of black people, putting such a high emphasis on transgenderism? Because over the past three years Transgenderism has been the main social issue of the progressive movement. For thousands of years we've been told that men are men and women are women. Never has this been disputed until recently. Now anyone can claim any gender at any time. Now we have had to relabel our restrooms to include trans people. Now we've been told that there are over 100 different genders you can choose to be. This movement has risen so fast and so broad that you can actually be prosecuted for hate speech by accidentally mislabeling someone with a pronoun that they do not prefer. If they look like a man, talk like a man, walk like a man, and have man parts.... and you call them sir instead of ma'am... you could be looking at some sort of prosecution. In America! I'm in culture shock!

But wait... it gets worse. Because of course 2020 happens to be an election year, and not since the year before the Civil War began have we had such tension and division between the two major political parties of the United States of America. There's talk of states seceding. There's talk of a new civil war coming. There's an actual movement... in the greatest democratic republic the world has ever known, to replace our free markets with government regulated socialism. Communism is no longer a taboo ideology in our college classrooms. The first amendment is under attack. The 2nd amendment is under attack. The very foundation of our nation is now up for debate. Illegal immigration versus naturalized citizenship. Pro-life versus Pro-abortion. Natural climate change versus man-made climate change. Fake News versus Fact Checking. Private Insurance versus National Insurance. Trump versus Biden.... And most importantly... free speech versus Cancel culture. I'm so sick of the state of politics right now... my head is spinning... I'm in culture shock!

We live in a very shocking culture, with ever changing goal lines, and it can make you dizzy. I was talking with a friend the other day and he said that 2020 feels just like we've walked into an episode of the Twilight Zone. It feels almost like we are living in an alternate reality. We've never seen anything like this before.

Turn with me to **Matthew 24:1-14** for a minute. Jesus makes it clear that this is where we are headed as we get closer to the rapture and the second coming of Christ. The closer we get to the day of the Lord, the worse things are going to get. So, in reality... we haven't entered a parallel universe, we haven't entered the twilight zone.. we are actually just seeing scripture fulfilled. It was always going to get shockingly worse before it got better. We are in the last days.

And instead of just ranting on Facebook, or protesting at the capitol, or cowering in our homes... I want us to learn how to respond to all of this according to scripture. How do we confront all of this... in a righteous way that brings glory to God? We can make a difference for Christ in a shocking culture. And so, for the next month or so we are going to be looking at our current culture, the pressing issues of our time, and see them for what they truly are... not problems to fix... but part of God's plan to show his glory to the world.

Over the course of this series my prayer is that we would stop being shocked by the immorality we see all around us and instead be shook into taking action that sees lives transformed by the love of Jesus Christ. And, today we are going to start by briefly observing what this passage and others say concerning the end times and how it relates to our current culture in America today. In order to see Christ in the culture we must be Christ in our culture. No doubt we believe that God has us where he has us to transform the world around us. **1 John 2:15-17** says... "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever." **Romans 12:2** says... "do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds... This is so true for us today. We are in the world but not of the world. We must change the world without chasing it. Today I want us to set the stage for engaging a shocking culture with this strategy; **Our Culture May Shock Us But We Mustn't Let It Shake Us.**

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first way we need to respond to our shocking culture is... **Don't Be Led Astray (vs4-5, 10-11)**. You guys get it... you know how hard it is to not be led astray by the voices in our culture today. In these last days it is and will continue to be very confusing as to what is true and factual or what is false and deceptive. And there is no bigger voice muddying the truth than the mainstream media in America. One commentator for one channel will claim something as fact and then another commentator from another channel will fact check him and claim that it's not fact, but then the other station will have someone fact check the fact checking of the original fact. And it may even go further than that. Perhaps our mainstream news coverage is nothing more than just a perpetual loop of fact checking the fact checking of the fact checking of the fact checking... you get it. So who's telling the truth? Who really knows. As long as we have warring news and media outlets that give a completely different spin on the exact same stories I guess just pick which one sounds the best to you. That's what we are already doing anyway isn't it.

But not only has the mainstream media muddied the waters on what we can really believe about our culture today... not only do we not know what to believe about our culture... we don't know what to believe about morality itself anymore. Therefore we are being led astray from God and the Bible. **In the last 40 years Christians who believe that sex outside of marriage is not a sin has risen to almost 80%... we know the Bible clearly says that it is. In the last 20 years Christians who believe that homosexuality is not a sin has risen from 44% to an astounding 70%... we know clearly according to the Bible that it is sin. Today only 50% of professing Christians still believe that the Bible is the inspired and infallible word of God. And get this, only 16% of Americans claim to be Bible believing, Jesus worshipping, church attending followers of Christ.**

And what voice led the charge in leading us astray? How did we get here? The silver screen and the small screen. Hollywood. The entertainment industry has slowly made sinful issues seem more normal on television and in movies, helping to move those beliefs in the minds of the public. You guys know I love movies... but apart from a strong foundation in the Word and a resolve to not be moved... they can lead us astray... and they have. So understand what I'm saying. Hollywood is the loudest voice in leading us astray, but they aren't the number one culprit. Mom, and Dad... you are. Let me let you behind the Sloane curtain a little bit. We let our kids watch movies with us... some movies that aren't the most Christian, some that have some language or violence or bad attitudes, or worldly culture. I know how dare us, right. But, here's what we do. Every time we watch something that we know we don't want our kids to believe or something that could lead them astray, we stop, we talk about it, and we look at what the Bible says about it. Once again... our kids are in the world but it's my responsibility to make sure they aren't of the world. It's our job as parents to disciple our children to not be led astray by the lies of the enemy's voice in the media. Listen, **when we fail to teach our children the truth, they will believe whatever the world tells them.** They will have the conversations about worldly culture one way or another... are you leading the conversation Dad, or is someone else? If it's not you... the chances are great that they will be led astray.

But media isn't the only voice that is leading us astray. Satan has purposefully filled churches with false theological teachers; liberal preachers, who have watered down the Bible and the Gospel leading many astray from the Biblical fundamentals we all believed half a century ago. Many of these preachers are leading Christians away from Christ rather than closer to him. Be careful which voice you are listening to.

But, again... we shouldn't be shocked by all of this... and we can't be shaken by this. Because the Bible tells us that the world will give us different messages. In fact the world will look foolish to us, but we will

look foolish to the world. Here are just a few of these verses that show this. **1 Corinthians 3:18-20, 1 Corinthians 4:4, and 1 Corinthians 1:18.** Biblical culture and worldly culture are like oil and water... they do not mix. They should not mix.

So how do we keep from being shocked and shaken and led astray in our culture. We stand on the foundation of the Bible. The Bible is still without error and the complete true words of God and the standard by which we live. **We must not allow the current culture and it's popular trends to compromise what we know to be true in the Bible.** Sin is still sin... and it still breaks God's heart. No matter how main stream pre-marital sex is in the media or television it's still sin. No matter how main stream adultery sin the media it's still sin. No matter how main stream homosexuality, transexuality, or pedophilia becomes ... it's still sin. Do not stray from the truth of the Word. We must preach truth, we must disciple our children, and we must not allow the culture to lead us astray. **Our Culture May Shock Us But We Mustn't Let It Shake Us.**

The second way we need to respond to our shocking culture is... **Don't Be Alarmed (vs6-8).** In a shocking culture it's hard not to be shocked.. it's hard not to be alarmed. For example, yesterday I said, "I'm not shocked by anything anymore" and today I started looking at the news and before I could catch my self I said, "I'm shocked." What is that we are not to be alarmed by? Wars and rumors of wars. How about the war on terror – still not over, or the war on drugs – which is still not over, and will never be over. Or what about Russia & China invading territories like Chrimea, Ukraine, Taiwan, and Hong Kong? What about the Iranian and North Korean Nuclear threats? What about the current riots in our streets? I'd say, yes... we got wars and rumors of wars... and you say I'm not supposed to be alarmed?

What else are we not to be alarmed about? Natural disasters. Like, earthquakes. Weird isn't it that just a couple of weeks ago some of us felt our very first earthquake which just so happened to be the largest Earthquake in North Carolina in 100 years. Or what about hurricanes like Laura which just destroyed the Louisiana coastline. Or what about the California and Colorado wildfires. Or what about the 10million people world wide that have died from famines since 1990. Or what about the 24 million people infected and the 800,000 people who have died from the Covid-19 virus. So yeah.. we got natural disasters galore... and you say I'm not supposed to be alarmed?

Why? Why shouldn't we be shocked, alarmed... scared to death? Because Jesus tells us that these things must take place. In God's sovereign plan, the fulfillment of the age culminates in ever increasing disasters for two reasons. One, to show that this world is not what we should long for or place our hope in... it's finite. And, two, to show us that

the Bible prophecy is true. All of this is part of God's plan... and it all ends in victory as Jesus returns and sets up Heaven on Earth. Yep... it's going to get worse... but then it will get way better. Jesus is in control. **We aren't shocked by culture when we realize that this is God's plan and that he has it all under control. Our Culture May Shock Us But We Mustn't Let It Shake Us.**

And lastly, the third way we need to respond to our shocking culture is... **Don't Be Ashamed (vs9-14)**. In these end times you could be dismayed by all means of persecution; tribulations, death, hatred. The world is going to come at you hard and heavy. And you will be tempted to forsake your savior. I encourage you to hold fast to **Romans 1:16**, and boldly proclaim; I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. No matter what you do to me... I will not be ashamed.

In these end times you could be discouraged by unchecked lawlessness and hatred, of a love grown cold. I tell you what, I've never been more discouraged by the lawlessness and indifference towards fellow humans as I've seen this past year. It truly feels that love has grown cold in America. But we were told it would be like this weren't we. Look at **2 Timothy 3:1-5, and Ephesians 2:1-3**.

But it doesn't matter how evil and wicked and cruel this world becomes, and it doesn't matter how discouraged or dismayed we get... we must endure. We must remain resolute in our resolve to endure in two specific ways. First, in our walk with Christ. We must continue to grow in our walk with Christ everyday. We must be intentional in our discipleship journey every day. We must be disciplined to remain in the word, in prayer, in fellowship, and in worship no matter what. And secondly we must endure in our evangelism. We must resolve to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world starting right here in Danville. No matter what... we will not be ashamed. Listen, **we can't give in, give up or give out... we must go on** for the cause of Christ. **Our Culture May Shock Us But We Mustn't Let It Shake Us.**

Application

So what's the bottom line. Well, it's this... Our world and our culture are jacked up... and we can't change it as a whole, because this is God's plan. But, we can still seek to make a difference in the lives of the individuals who God has given us as friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family. And how do we do that? How do we respond to our shocking culture? Don't be led astray from the path God has put you on... shock seeks to divert your path. Falsehoods seek to deceive us. Be vigilant, and stand on the word of God. Don't be alarmed... by the shocking things of our culture. It is the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy.. it is all part of God's plan... and he is in control. Shock seeks to dilute your faith. Keep

your faith in Christ. And, Don't be ashamed... by the shocking ways our world will come at you personally. We must not give into fear of persecution. We must not get discouraged by the evil that we encounter. We must endure and preach the Gospel no matter what. We look at all of this and instead of being shocked and running... we do the opposite. We are emboldened by the Holy Spirit to preach and disciple. **The more shocking our culture gets, the stronger our mission and message becomes. Our Culture May Shock Us But We Mustn't Let It Shake Us**

Conclusion

So I'm stuck outside the international airport in Mumbai and I'm so culture shocked that I'm dizzy and so I sit down outside and put my hands on my head and pray to God to help me. Just then a guy comes up and says... it's time to get in the van. Not... a welcoming phrase to those of us afraid of being kidnapped. I say, do you know me? He says, yes... you are American and you need to go to the domestic airport. I said... domestic airport? He said yes, this is the international airport for flying to America. You need to go to the domestic airport to go to somewhere else in India, right? Then it all made sense. I said.. .right, and away we went. After a short pit-stop at a hotel so we could take a shower and clean up we were whisked away to the other airport where I got on another flight and eventually made my way to my destination. It was all a little scary... It was all culturally shocking, but eventually I made it safely to where I was going.

I assure you friends... this world is as crazy as it's ever been... it's shocking... but it shouldn't be... Jesus told us this was going to happen, and we will get to our destination safe and sound.. I promise. **Our Culture May Shock Us But We Mustn't Let It Shake Us**