

## We Can Believe

### **Part 10**

#### **Text – Ezekiel 22 : 30**

**Intro** – From Conservative commentator, **Todd Starnes**: “There are lots of snowflakes in **Wauwatosa, Wisconsin**. Unfortunately, they’re not the winter wonderland kind, but the woke kind.

City Hall sent out orders banning religious Christmas decorations. Topping the list of no-no’s for yuletide décor are the colors red and green.

**Instead, City Hall recommended inclusive decorations like snowflakes, greenery, and festive colors like blue and purple. Anything without a specific religious connotation is okay.**

Wisconsin Right Now first exposed the Grinches at Wauwatosa City Hall. They obtained a copy of the massive missive sent out by deputy city administrator Melissa Weiss.

Snowmen are banned as well, but Snow people are allowed. Frosty has gone gender neutral in Wisconsin.

Above all, City Hall says this time of year is about fostering respect and inclusivity and the only way to make that possible is to crack down on candy canes and yule logs and of course the Baby Jesus.”

Situations like these are why we should be making a difference. The more of these battles we ignore, the greater the likelihood that our freedoms will continue to deteriorate.

We have to believe, and we must act on the belief, that we can make a difference!

Let’s consider two last **Questions** regarding this:

#### **I. What does the Bible Teach about Christians Making a Difference?**

- The Bible reminds us of our God-given role in society:

## 1. We are Salt & Light – Matthew 5 : 13 – 16 –

- As the **salt of the earth**, we have **4 responsibilities**:
  - A. Salt is Precious** – In Jesus’ day, salt was a valuable commodity.
    - Roman soldiers were sometimes paid with salt because of its value.
    - This practice is what gave rise to the saying, “**worth his salt.**”
  - B. Salt is a Preservative** – Salt has been used for centuries to preserve meats and to slow the process of decay.
    - We are called to have a preserving influence on the society and culture in which we live.
  - C. Salt is Flavorful** – How good would popcorn or peanuts be without salt?
    - As Christians, we should provide a godly flavor to our homes, neighborhoods, communities, and places of work.
  - D. Salt is an Irritant** – You know how sweat can irritate a cut or scrape on your skin when you're working.
    - The irritation alerts us to the injury so that it can be addressed.
    - We are called by God to point out the sinfulness of our day and promote obedience to Jesus Christ.
  
- As the **Light of the World**, consider these **Thoughts**:
  - A. Jesus pays us a great compliment and issues a sober responsibility – Vs. 14**
    - Jesus referred to Himself as the Light of the World in **John 8:12** and **John 9:5**, so to be called lights of the world is truly a compliment from our Lord!
      - But, as mentioned, there is also a responsibility.
        - We are to be **light givers.**
        - We best shine the light when we walk in humility and obedience before the Lord for others to see.
  - B. We are to live lives of distinction – Vs. 14**
    - Note in this verse that Jesus never challenges us to **become** salt and light.
      - He simply said that “**we are salt and light.**”
      - Either we’re salty and bearing light or we’re not.

- There is really no in-between ground when it comes to obeying or ignoring this fact.
- The essence of our **distinction** is seen in the need for **salt to impede the rot and decay of our culture** and in the need for **light to dispel the darkness of sin and degradation**.

### **C. Light is only beneficial if it is shared with others – Vss. 14-16**

- Notice the **parallels** He draws between light and the sharing of it:
  - **A city set on a hill – Vs. 14**
    - Jesus wants His disciples to live visible lives that will serve to attract others to the Father.
    - **ILLUSTRATION** – **Charles Spurgeon**: "Christ never contemplated the production of secret Christians, Christians whose virtues would never be displayed, pilgrims who would travel to heaven by night, and never be seen by their fellow pilgrims or anyone else."
  - **A lamp on a lampstand – Vs. 15**
    - Jesus knew that lights are never lit just to have a basket or covering placed over them.
    - Lamps are to be placed on lampstands so that all in the house can benefit from the light it emits.

### **D. There is a reason for our light to shine – Vs. 16**

- Jesus reminds us that the reason our lights are to shine is not for our accolades, so that people will ooh and ahh over us, but that **they will see Jesus and be attracted to Him**.

## **II. What Does History Teach Us about the Difference Christianity has Made?**

- The following list is not exhaustive, but reminds us of the power of our faith to do good in this fallen world:
  - 1. Christianity gave us hospitals –**
    - We are reminded to care for the sick.
    - Such was the work of believers in the lives of the sick, that in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, it was decreed that for every church built, a corresponding hospital be built next to it.

**2. Christianity gave us adoption and foster care –**

- Children have often suffered horribly from parents who did not want them.
- The early Christians were the first ones to get the babies no one wanted and adopt them, even setting up adoption centers for children who had been rejected by their families.

**3. Christianity gave women greater dignity and freedom –**

- Women were often viewed as their husband's property.
- Jesus elevated the place and role of women.
- You will note in Paul's writing that husbands are instructed to "love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her."

**4. Christianity gave history its most significant artists and artwork –**

- Leonardo DaVinci's Last Supper is hailed as one of the most magnificent paintings in history.
- Michelangelo and Rembrandt made Christian themes the focus of some of their artwork.

**5. Christianity gave history some of its most excellent musicians and music –**

- Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven were all Christians and helped shape the history of music.

**6. Christianity gave history its most excellent works of literature -**

- We have mentioned earlier that the Bible is the best-selling book of all time.
- The City of God, written by **Augustine**, has sold more copies than any other book in history, except for the Bible.
- John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress has been translated into nearly every language in the world.

**7. Christianity was one of the most powerful forces in abolishing slavery –**

- Many strong and consistent voices came out of the Church calling for the end of slavery.
- **William Wilberforce** was an English statesman and Christian who called for the end of slavery and worked tirelessly until it was abolished.

**INVITATION** – I close with this statement from a Christian historian: “The single greatest change (Christianity brought to the world) was the concept that God loved his creation and especially human beings.

In the pre-Christian world the manmade gods were indifferent to humanity. Indeed, sometimes the gods were jealous of humans. Humans feared the gods and tried to placate them, even bribe them.

But Christians proclaimed that ‘God is love’ and that God sent his Son to bring reconciliation between God and humanity. Ancient pagans had never heard of such a thing. The idea that God actually loved them and was willing to send his Son to serve humanity, even die for humanity was almost incomprehensible.”

This is our message, a message of forgiveness and hope. It is a message our world desperately needs and one that we must believe and proclaim.

We can believe in our faith, and we must believe that our faith can make a difference in our world!