

Column – To be a light

This past week I read about a church in Florida that was floundering. People had moved away from the neighbourhood. A plant had closed. Those in the church were discouraged.

Then, someone found the bulletin from the very first service held 50 years earlier. On the cover was the church's motto: To be a light in the west end of the city.

The church had lost its purpose. With that purpose rediscovered, the Church came back to life. No longer disheartened, they were men and women on a mission.

If you think about it, "To be a light" is a good motto for any church or an individual for that matter. Indeed, it is a very Biblical one. In 1 Peter 2:9, former pagans who had received Christ are exhorted:

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

But what would it look like on the ground if God's people took on this mission?

Well, no doubt there would be new excitement and purpose. The focus would shift from within the walls of the church to outside those walls. The doors of the church would fling open and light would stream forth into the darkness that we find all over America at this present moment.

In a radio broadcast aired in the 1960s, Paul Harvey spoke of the darkness that was already beginning to envelop the United States. He titled it: "If I were the devil" and began by saying:

"If I were the prince of darkness, I would want to engulf the whole world in darkness . . . I would not be happy until I had seized the ripest apple on the tree . . . I would set about . . . to take over the United States."

He continued by revealing his strategy:

"I'd subvert the churches first . . . To the young, I would whisper that the Bible is a myth. I would convince the children that man created God instead of the other way around;

“If I were the devil, I’d soon have families at war with themselves, churches at war with themselves and nations at war with themselves until each, in its turn, was consumed.

“I’d peddle narcotics to whom I could . . . I would encourage schools to refine young intellect but neglect to discipline emotions. I’d tell teachers to let those students run at will. And before you knew it, you’d have drug-sniffing dogs and metal detectors at every schoolhouse door;

“I would evict God from the courthouse and the schoolhouse and them from the houses of Congress;

“I’d lure priests and pastors into misusing boys and girls and church money;

“I’d take from those who have and give to those who wanted until I had killed the incentive of the ambitious . . . I’d convince the young that marriage is old-fashioned, that swinging is more fun.”

He concluded, “If I were the devil, I’d just keep right on doing what he’s doing” . . . and the prince of darkness has in the years that have followed.

Is it not high time God’s people rediscovered their mission . . . a mission of only four words: To be a light?

LIGHTEN our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord; and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

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