

How to live well in a world sorounded by bad news (#1)

Media and the Christian

by Rev. Sara Macavei-Katocz

Grace Presbyterian Church

Matthew 6:22-23(NRSV):



The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Philippians 4:8 (NRSV):

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

I. Bread and mind/soul analogy

I brought with me today something. Bread.

Let me tell you **the story** of of this bread:

This is a real bread. Made with half white flour/ half full corn flour, with see salt and olive oil. It was prepared with much care; the yeast rose in it three times, and was backed with much care – for 5 hours. It is “a little burned” – one would say. Yes, indeed is VERY BURNED!

It happened slowly, and I realized that is so badly burned when nothing could be done anymore.

If this bread would have been exposed to the heat for 45 minutes, or mostly for 1 hour, all would be fine. It would be good, tasty, it would not leave a nasty smell. It would not leave a mark on my hand...

With this bread the damage is irreversible. I cannot make this bread eatable. I cannot turn the process back. I cannot say: well, from now on I will be careful. Let me have another chance. It is done.

Our brain and soul are like this BREAD. As this bread when it was dough. God made it to be sensitive, to be receptive, and to be formed to his image, to be molded by his love and his grace. They are like the dough: made with care, with gentleness, with all the good ingredients.

The society around us is like an OVEN. It has good things, and the good things can help us to get closer to God, to make us really a blessing for many. But there are things that will turn our soul and brain into a burned, smelly, useless stone, like this bread.

One of the things that can have a quite damaging effect is the media: messages, images, verbal and non-verbal images – they are like to too long and to high heat of an oven.

How does it work this damaging effect?

II. Media

A. *There are few types of media, like:*

Newspapers and magazines: What do they report? War, criminal events, disaster, abuse, economical crisis, the life of celebrities, quarrels of the "high society", new fashion, extreme images, extreme things.

Internet: endless possibility to go deep down or to raise high.

TV. And what about the Tv? What does TV for you and to your brain? The picture on the TV changes every five or six seconds, either by changing the camera angle or cutting to an entirely new scene. Time is continuously cut up into very small squesnces; the brain is conditioned to change at the expense of continuity of thought.

Adults and children are conditioned to instant gratification and crisis at many levels. It is a hypnosis of the brain. The brain believes that whatever it sees is true.

How many of you will take notes while watching the TV with the desire to question later on its validity?

The media today made everything relative. Moral standards have been conveniently transformed into a "value system." The media is clearly polishing up sin and make it look attractive.

Fifty-seven percent of television programs contain "psychologically harmful" violence, according to a study funded by the cable television industry. The study, released February 7, 1996, tracked 2,500 hours of television programming.

- Watching TV for more than 5-6 hours/ day is considered as totally demaging to the brain and will condition the thinking.
- In 2004, television became a \$52 billion industry. The networks know this fact. They know how much money is at stake and they know how much power the TV industry possesses. Newspaper industry and radio industry is just the same.

And what is very surprising: we take this burden into our lives WILLINGLY. No one is forcing us to buy a TV set. No one is forcing us to buy newspapers. We are told that reading newspaper, watching TV you will stay informed about what is happening in the world.

B. *The value system of the media:*

- Mindless Consumerism:

The average American is exposed to 247 commercials everyday. Buying things has become reflex, due partly to the ideal lifestyle flickering on the television. People end up living a life dictated to them.

- Poor Body Image:

Never before in history have we been surrounded by so many examples of physical perfection, shaped by cosmetic surgeons. And never before so many people were depressed

because of the way how they look. Attractiveness became a value to pursue, and still, many do not measure up.

- Roaming Eye:

A tendency to want what you don't have can be destructive if not monitored and controlled. Attractiveness became the main value dictated. Remind yourself that relationships are built upon more than physical attraction.

- Danger Fixation.

- And so on.

III. The media and us

When was the last time that the Media communicated truth to you? Really? Real truth...

And when was the last time when after watching TV, after reading the newspaper, after coming from a movie theatre, after spending time on internet your heart and soul was filled with peace, love and the praise of God?

More on the other way around... You got discouraged, you were puzzled and shocked, and did not understand why there is so much bad in the world...

There are different questions one might want to address as such:

1. Who has the benefit in flooding the world only with news that are focusing on crisis, war, and scary, so to say bad things?
2. What kind of benefit is there?
3. What kind of headlines, news, and informations are selected for the mass media?
4. Is the world really so bad and is the world bad in that sense as the media is depicting for us?

Now let me ask another question:

I know that Christians represent a certain small percentage of the World population, but still is an important number:

- When was the last time that in the headlines there was anything about Christians, such as their family lives, their love for each other, their relationship with God, including what is happening with persecuted Christians around the world, or into what languages the Bible is still not translated. (Maps)

But you will hear about different people's right, you will hear about abortion debates of various groups nothing compared in number, the so called *freedom of choice* and you will know the ups and downs of celebrities...

IV. The Christian and the media

How to live well and not under the pressure of the media that will burn your mind and soul?

Three ways to evaluate:

A. **EYES & EARS:**

Media enters through our eyes and through our ears. Do you remember the song?

Oh, be careful little eyes, what you see.

Oh, be careful little eyes, what you see.

There's a Father up above, looking down in tender love,

So be careful little eyes, what you see.

Oh, be careful little ear what you hear,

Oh, be careful little ear what you hear.

There's a Father up above, looking down in tender love,

So be careful little eyes, what you see.

The Father is looking down in **tender love**. He is looking as you look to your small child who is climbing up on a book shelf after many request not to. With tender love. Oh, be careful little eye, oh be careful little ear.

So, our eye is a channel. A two way channel.

1. First, **information will enter through our eyes**, and then, our eye will tell the outside world what is inside.

Job is telling us about this "from outside in" motion: "*I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin?*" (Job 31:1)-

- meaning: I will not allow my eye to wonder wherever it wants and what ever wants.
- I will make a covenant, an agreement, that I will control it.

Sometimes to be able to make a covenant with your eye you need the help someone else and accountability.

David said, "*I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. . .*" David knew from personal experience that looking at the wrong thing could be very harmful. Before he ever committed his sin with Bathsheba, he first allowed his eyes to LOOK upon her nude body (II Sam. 11:2). In Joshua 7:21, Achan sinned after he SAW the "Babylonish garment." In Eden, Eve sinned after she feasted her eyes upon the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:6).

Satan tempted the Lord Jesus by SHOWING Him all the kingdoms of this world (Lk. 4:5), and he will tempt you the same way. Satan will use everything including media, and particularly TV **to tempt you.**

Question: Would the Lord Jesus sit and watch the same programs that you watch? Would He sit there and watch the same news of violence that you watch? Well, would He? Think about it.

2. Eye is a channel to show what is inside – Jesus said.

When he is looking in your eyes, what will he see? Are you comfortable with Him looking into your eyes?

This is a good question to ask yourself after read something, after looking to something or watching TV: can I look to Jesus in the eye, and will he be pleased what he will see in my heart. Will he say light or will he see darkness?

B. TIME:

We are told in Ephesians 5:16 to redeem the time, because the days are evil. Time is valuable. As someone has said, "You can't kill time without injuring eternity."

Favorite pastime of a lot of people is television! By the age of eighteen, the average young person has wasted over THREE YEARS of his life watching TV! If you spend only two hours each day watching TV, you will waste ONE FULL YEAR every twelve years! That's SIX WASTED YEARS out of a seventy-two year life! How many years have you already wasted?

Are you prepared to stand before God and give account for that wasted time? What are you doing with the 168 hours per week that God gives you?

C. VALUE

whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable

In order that what you are reading, watching will build you up and will not damage you, take this into consideration:

Is it true? Is it honorable?

Is it just? Is it pure? Is it pleasing to God? Is it commendable?

So, if to all of the questions you can answer with yes, than those things will not damage you, and they will work for you, helping to live well.

If the answer is NO or MAYBE, or I DO NOT KNOW, than more than probable it will damage you, overburn you, your brain, your wisdom, your heart, your emotions and you will be just like this bread: black, dry, lifeless.

God gave us freedom and strength to choose good and to live well. And Jesus is with you along the way.

Will you commit to live well for His glory?

V. SUMMARY:

A. *God is asking us:*

- To focus our mind on Godly things:

Philippians 4:8 (NRSV):

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

- To guard our eyes, our time and measure our values to Godly measure.
- To expose us mainly to God, and less to temptations (like media, the example of today)

B. *HOW TO LIVE WELL:*

- Work hard to protect the peace of your mind and soul; put “guardians” to filter what is getting inside of your mind and soul, through eyes and ears.
- Be sensitive to each other
- Be sensitive to the “inner little voice”, to the Holy Spirit which is in us, to God’s guidance
- Be worryless, rejoice each day in the Lord for what God is giving YOU

AMEN