



The Southeast Sower

Southeast Church of Christ

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**“What Went Ye Out For
To See?”**

By

Jeff Haught

**“We should often blush
for our very best actions, if
the world did but see all the
motives upon which they
were done.”**

**- Francois de La
Rochefoucauld**

I recently read the story of one of the past kings of France. It seems he and his royal entourage arrived at church services one Sunday only to find the court preacher in attendance. Surprised to see all of the empty seats the king asked the preacher why no one else was there. The preacher replied that he had announced to the congregation beforehand that the king would not be there. It seems the preacher wanted the king to see who came only to flatter or gain favor with him and his royal cohorts and who came to truly worship God.

Acting out of impure motives is a dreadful malady that has plagued humanity from the beginning of time. It knows no boundaries or borders. Like all sinful behavior, it is a condition to which all are prone. No one is immune. And, like all sinful behavior, we are most susceptible to it at the point when we think we are so far above and beyond it.

Such was the case with many in Jesus Christ’s day whose focus indicated underlying improper motives. In discussing the character of John the Baptist, Jesus repeatedly asked a very pointed question about the motives of many drawn to John’s ministry.

Matt. 11:7-11, “And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? ⁸But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft (fine) raiment? behold, they that wear soft (fine) clothing are in kings’ houses. ⁹But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰For

The Southeast

Church of Christ meets at:

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Phone: 330.628.7432

SERVICES:

Sunday

Bible Study: 10:00 am

Worship: 10:50 am

6:00 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7:30 pm

Visit our website at:

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this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. ¹¹Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

The multitudes had gone out to see and hear John, but what attracted them? What were their motives? What was the object of their focus? What did they come out to see? Was it simply the novelty of seeing a man preaching in the wilderness, wearing camel's hair clothing with a leather belt, and eating locusts and wild honey? Were they expecting to see someone dressed in fine raiment and disappointed when they saw that he was not? According to one commentator the soft raiment mentioned here was made of fine linen, and was worn by those of earthly stature chiefly for show. Jesus asked if their motives were superficial and if that was the real object of their focus.

So what did they really go out to see? Jesus suggested the proper motive was or should have been to honor God by focusing their attention on the message of repentance spoken by a man of great character. The place of the preaching, (the wilderness), and the coarse outward attire of the man doing the preaching, (camel's hair and leather), should not have been the object of their focus. In focusing on these material objects they missed out on the spiritual blessing and benefit of John's message, repentance.

If we are to be pleasing to God and true followers of Christ then each one of us must apply Jesus Christ's question to ourselves? What is the object of our focus in assembling together for worship? What are our motives? In the words of Jesus, what do we come out to see? Is it to see or be seen by others? Is it to be entertained? What do we come out to see? To satisfy our eyes or the eyes of visitors with just an outward display of our "Sunday best?" Is it merely to demonstrate our knowledge and wisdom in Bible study? What do we come out to see? To self-righteously praise or be praised for how much more good and spiritual we are than others? Or, do we simply come out of habit or ritual, seeking to gain the favor of men?

So, what then, did we come out to see? Certainly, the proper motive should be to honor God by focusing our attention on the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It should be to worship Him from our hearts in spirit and in truth. It should be to renew our minds, being transformed into a new spiritual creation by the Holy Spirit through the Word. The place of our worship, our outward attire (apart from immodest, irreverent clothing), and receiving the praise of men should not be the object of

our focus. Assembling together, studying God's word, and dressing modestly and reverently for worship is certainly pleasing to God but it is nothing more than vain worship if done out of an impure heart, with impure motives. In focusing on ourselves, others or material objects in our service we are missing out on the many, wonderful spiritual blessings and benefits we have in Jesus Christ, and perhaps it shows in our personal lives. It seems many Christians consider the individual practice of their faith to be putting on their formal clothes and coming to the assembly three times a week. Unfortunately, when they get home after services, they take off their spiritual attire right along with their formal attire, and hang it in the closet until the next appointed service.

God seeks inwardly genuine, not outwardly formal worshippers. He desires those who would worship Him in faith, with a reverential spirit, and a formality of heart. He desires those who think, live and breathe with pure motives in all that they say and do. Are you acting with the right motives? What is the object of your focus as you serve God? What did you come out to see?