

Palisades Community Bible Church

Online Sunday School

The Gunsmoke Phenomenon – It Takes Two Mobs

January 11, 2021

Will evil continue to sweep America?

The answer is; “Yes.” As long as our nation continues permitting it, IT WILL! As long as we keep repeating the history found in the Scriptures, IT WILL! As long as evil is carried out, in full display, and we watch it happen, IT WILL!

Let’s look to a famous old TV Western for an example of how it works. Were you a fan of Gunsmoke? Well, there is a course leadership education called; **“The Gunsmoke Phenomenon.”** It demonstrates the truth behind this well-proven statement: “All it takes for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.”

It goes like this:

A bunch of cowboys in Miss Kitty’s saloon hears that there’s a cattle rustler at the bar. (Naturally, this ONLY happens when the Sheriff is occupied out of town.) So, the biggest, baddest hombre confronts the supposed rustler at gunpoint. Every response the bewildered traveler gives only confirms the big man’s accusations; he has no bill of sale for his cattle, he has no witnesses to his purchases, he is a stranger in these parts, etc.

So, the mob grows angry and restless. Someone brings in a rope, and someone else hollers; “Let’s string ‘em up!” They drag him out and into the street. Someone else produces a bullwhip and proceeds to “Teach’m a dang lesson.” The minister tries to intervene, but ends up dancing over bullets fired at his feet before retreating back to the church. A barmaid screams “STOP!” and is thrown to the ground, dress torn. None of the other townspeople dare confront them.

Pretty soon, the mob is all lathered up for a hangin’ and they tie the accused to his horse. The mob heads out of town to the only tree in the territory with a horizontal branch. Next, they have a noose around the man’s neck and the leader of the mob is about to give the signal, when a shot rings out.

Everyone turns to see Sheriff Matt Dillon riding fast toward them. He pulls up, holds his shootin' iron on the leader and says; "Cut that man down....NOW!"

"But, Sheriff, he's a low-down, thievin', cattle rustler!"

"Not until he's had a fair trial, he ain't." counters Dillon. "Now, git that rope off him!"

"But, Sheriff!"

"If you hang a man without a trial, YOU'RE a murderer! And, you'll have to kill me to do it. You'll hang for two murders." Then, Matt peers into the eyes of the mob; "Y'all wanna be party to a double murder!?"

They all look down, kick the dirt, and mutter as they slowly get on their horses.

OK, what happened? An entire group of angry, motivated people was about to do something really bad. On their own, not one individual would have attempted to kill an accused man. But, as a mob, they took on a separate identity. It wasn't a team, it wasn't a committee, it was a mob.

Webster's Dictionary: Mob: a large and disorderly crowd of people. Especially: one bent on riotous or destructive action

As we go forth, keep in mind the phrase: "...destructive action" in this definition.

"The Gunsmoke Phenomenon" is a name given to what causes a mob to form, and what it takes to diffuse it. First, mobs are usually formed around an event which angers, or excites people to exact some sort of 'justice' or take some self-serving action— apart from the law, and on their own terms.

A mob is a group that enables the worst of the worst human emotions to surface, and it gives them unity, direction....and permission! It becomes a form of forceful bullying. Just look at the vigilante behaviors of the rioters in certain cities over the past few months. Do you remember a few years back, when the mob behavior was so bad, that Veterans Stadium in Philadelphia put a small jail and makeshift court in its basement to deal with out-of-control fans?

A mob does not act entirely on its own. There is another mob that forms, simultaneously, and it is necessary for the formation of the violent mob. It is complicit and destructive. It's called "Bystanders."

“The Bystander Effect.” This effect comes into play during an emotionally stressing event in which the ‘bystander’ is first, and foremost, concerned for his/her own welfare...then, they freeze. They do nothing. They may not encourage the violent mob, but neither do they try to stop it.

Research has shown that, as the violent mob is forming, its members look around for “good people” to interject. If good people retreat, the mob gains momentum.....permission! Silence equals support.

Surely, you have watched the nightly news in horror as rioters have razed the downtowns of major cities in our country.....AND THE POLICE HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO STAND BY!

Bystanders are also a mob; a “disorderly crowd,” intent on self-preservation, which results in “destructive action.” The destructive action is doing nothing while evil has its way! Many a “good person” watched through parted curtains as their Jewish neighbors were stuffed into rail cars in Nazi Germany.

Remember Sarah Palin? She was the VP running mate with McCain in 2008. She was immediately set upon by the ‘mob media.’ Their oft-stated intent was to “destroy her.” Though she was the well-known and successful Governor of Alaska, not ONE individual in her party stepped up to defend her against the mob. They watched as she was systematically ruined! She was left twisting in the wind by each and every one of her colleagues. Why? The rest of her party was afraid of the same treatment! They became bystanders. Their disorderly conduct, not only permitted, but actually enabled the MOB to achieved its goal. Bystanders helped the “destructive action” to occur by avoiding discomfort.

I was heavily involved in community theater back in the 90s. Most of the directors chose productions that had lots of children in the cast; ‘Annie’, ‘The King and I’, etc. Along with the talent pool of children came the parents who felt their kids were ‘leading role material.’ I’ve seen several directors attacked by parent mobs who felt their kids did not get the roles they deserved.

Remember the trial of Jesus before Pilate, the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, or Paul before Felix and Festus in Acts 24-26 (remember, Paul had been falsely imprisoned for 2 years before his trial). In each event, the mob of Jewish LEADERS was intent on killing these good men. They falsely accused each one and

brought in false witnesses against them. Although there were many bystanders observing, the scriptures record NO GOOD ACTS on their parts!

Seems all the 'good acts' were after the fact: The women preparing Jesus' body, Joseph of Arimathea providing a grave for Jesus, etc.

If the "good guys" only show up AFTER the bad guys leave, what's to be said about the bystanders? Where was the "Sherriff Matt Dillon" in these events? Could nobody speak on behalf of the accused? Could nobody speak up for the law? Why were the friends and colleagues all mute? Where were the people simply interested in law and justice? Why were they all frozen? The Bystander mob focused on self-preservation and, in their abstinence, fomented violence.

Mark 4:17 And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the Word, immediately they fall away.

So, let's look at what it takes to stop a mob: **A good person must take action.**

Observe what happened when Sherriff Dillon intervened in the lynch mob. ONE GOOD PERSON stood against them and spoke for righteousness. It wasn't his gun; every man in the mob had guns. It wasn't his stature; any two men in the mob could have taken him. It really wasn't his badge; they could have buried him alongside the rustler, and nobody would tell.

No, it wasn't for physical reasons that the mob had a change of heart, it was the courage and the righteousness of the one who opposed evil. First, the Sherriff stood on something higher than every person there; the righteous law. Second, he did not blink; he faced every one of those mob cowards and let them know they'd have to commit two murders if they were to proceed. Even the evil know they are in the dark. The Sheriff shined light on what was making them stumble.

Proverbs 4: 18 The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until midday. 19 But the way of the wicked is like the darkest gloom; they do not know what makes them stumble.

Quiniso Mogale (look him up!) writes:

"They claim to love Christ but they deny him by their actions, they claim to follow Christ but they are not following His footsteps.

Instead of loving Christ they love themselves more, instead of following Christ they follow Satan. These are the Christian cowards.

Christian cowards are always more worried about those exposing evil than the evil being exposed. They love music that blasphemes God.

They are silent when they are supposed to speak. No coward can be the friend of the truth. Cowards have always been the friends of lies; Satan is the father of lies.

Christian cowards don't preach the word of God, they want to please people and they don't want to speak for God. They say they are only supposed to preach love; the word of God is now referred to as hate speech.

They stand up for things God hates, they are fighting against God. They stand up for pride instead of humility; they stand up for lies instead of truth. They stand up for sexual immorality, they also stand up for the shedding of innocent blood.”

Well, now, this is all very interesting, isn't it? But, what do we do with it? Sin is running rampant. It's infested our society, our government, our schools and our churches. Our once God fearing nation is becoming Sodom and Gomorrah before our eyes! I'm in my 60s, and it's been growing exponentially since I've been mature enough to understand it!

Where has the Christian community been? Did we lose our courage when we watched what happened to Dan Quayle, Jerry Falwell, and the Moral Majority? Why do we give our accusers such power over us? Is the camera and the microphone REALLY that intimidating? (Could it be that we are reminded of our OWN SIN, and we don't want it exposed??) Why are Christians in other countries willing to suffer real persecution, but Americans dare not?

Why, during 2020, did American Christians stop worshipping...just because the most corrupt people in our society told us to do it? If we learn nothing else in 2021, may we PLEASE learn that “the fear of a thing is greater than the thing, itself?!”

Revelation 3: 5 “I know your deeds; you are neither cold nor hot. How I wish you were one or the other! 16 So because you are lukewarm— neither hot nor cold— I am about to vomit you out of My mouth!”

Luke 14: 34 “Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? 35 It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Look around at the corrupt churches in our community. The crosses on many steeples, today, are a farce. Yet, where are the mature Christians? We are in our OWN churches, in our little bubbles, not interacting with the world. Has today's Christian become a bystander, only? Jesus did NOT call us to retreat.

“Christianity = pacifism” exists ONLY in CULTS. Rather, He said:

Matthew 10:16 “Behold, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves; therefore, be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. 17 But beware of men; for they will hand you over to their councils and flog you in their synagogues. 18 On My account, you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles. 19 But when they hand you over, do not worry about how to respond or what to say. In that hour you will be given what to say. 20 For it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. 21 Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rise against their parents and have them put to death. 22 You will be hated by everyone because of My name, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved.”

Do these words embolden....or paralyze...the Christian bystander, today?

I'm a former military guy. I think like a warrior. If I were Satan, more than having a hundred pagans, I'd rather have ONE Christian bystander! Pagans follow Satan all by themselves, but Christians have been disciplined to be inert...and they spread that disease inside their churches. If you are going to succeed in a church, you must be “nice”; above everything else, NICE. A church full of bystanders allows far more damage than all the pagans Satan can recruit.

Proverbs 30: 27 locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks;

Matthew 10: 32 “Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before

men, I will also deny him before My Father in heaven. 33 But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father in heaven. 34 Do not assume that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. 36 A man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’ 37 Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me; 38 and anyone who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. 39 Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

Phil Cooke, Ph.D “From the engine behind social service outreaches, to the founding of our greatest educational institutions and hospitals, to prayers before government sessions and sporting events, the Christian faith has made an indelible mark on our society — at least until recently.

Today that voice is in decline. Although a 2012 Pew Forum Study indicated that 73 percent of Americans still identify themselves as “Christian,” that number would drop dramatically when it comes to significant areas of influence such as the media, academia, business, entertainment and more.”

After Jesus had fed the thousands and walked on the stormy water, He was teaching in Capernaum. Once the crowd caught up with him, he said;

John 6:26 Jesus replied, “Truly, truly, I tell you, it is not because you saw these signs that you are looking for Me, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that perishes, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on Him God the Father has placed His seal of approval.”

Do you get it? They only followed him to get a free lunch. They were not there to be forged and shaped into disciples. This set up the following explanation:

John 6: 56 “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. 57 Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread that came

down from heaven. Unlike your fathers, who ate the manna and died, the one who eats this bread will live forever.”

In other words; ‘This isn’t some academic exercise. I’m not just pontificating about the cosmos. This is what God requires of you.’ These were difficult words, especially for the Jews, because so few had really internalized God’s Word. They had been raised with ‘traditions’ and just enough teaching that they had become inoculated. They thought they were ‘too cool for school.’ **Matthew 15: 3 Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?”**

John 6: 59 Jesus said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. 60 On hearing it, many of His disciples said, “This is a difficult teaching. Who can accept it?” 61 Aware that His disciples were grumbling about this teaching, Jesus asked them, “Does this offend you? 62 Then what will happen if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before?”

63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. 64 However, there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him.)

65 Then Jesus said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless the Father has granted it to him.” 66 From that time on many of His disciples turned back and no longer walked with Him.

“Does this offend you?” Jesus asked. He knew that they were not even faithful Jews, and the truth he was speaking was sand in their eyes.....searing hot oil in their ears! OF COURSE, IT OFFENDED THEM! Jesus had no intent of NOT offending them. Had he softened the message; it would not have divided the sheep from the goats.

Matthew 15: 8 “These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 9 They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules

Jesus is like today’s US military leaders; they hate the draft. The draft forces uncommitted, unable, misfit recruits into service. They cannot be molded into professional soldiers – and they consume more resources than they are worth. Better not to have them. That is why Jesus did not go running after those who

walked away from Him: “For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him.”

So, what we see with “...many of His disciples...” is that their “cornbread wasn’t done in the middle” (an old southern saying). They may have thought their golden-brown crust meant they were ready to follow Jesus (as long as they got free food), but their middle was soft and gooey.

A blacksmith, when forging a knife, must heat the steel until it glows orange. In this state, it becomes temporarily non-magnetic. He tests the hot metal with a magnet to be sure. Then, and only then, is the steel ready to be “tempered” by plunging it into a shocking bath of room temp oil. The result is a hardened steel blade that even a metal file cannot affect.

Jesus was shaping a faithful group of “spiritual warriors.” These bystanders quickly learned they were not willing to be heated to the non-magnetic state required of following Jesus. They turned back.

Those who call themselves Christians, today, far outnumber the pagans who multiply themselves with microphones and TV cameras and commit unimaginable violations against our society. But, far too many Christians cannot get their hearts off their own self-preservation (filling their bellies) long enough to serve as salt and light. (their cornbread ain’t done in the middle!) Bystanders!

Hosea 4:1 Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.

The founders of this Godly nation pledged their lives, their fortunes and their sacred honor to forge a place in which the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness is protected. For such a nation to endure, the **freedom of worship** had to be the first and foremost “right” secured by the law of our land. Many have spilled their own blood that you and I may have this right! Likewise, we only have freedom from sin through Jesus’ blood. **“Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.”** John Adams.

Numbers 20:12 Then the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me (proclaim my name holy) in the eyes of the children of

Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”

Bystander Christians live in avoidance. To them, “Peace” is the absence of conflict. “Peace,” to the weak of heart, means “ease.” By contrast, for the true follower of Christ, “Peace” is knowing Christ will prevail in the conflict. We can ONLY prevail if we are, first and foremost, dedicated to the cause of Christ.

As a Navy SEAL, we had to accept the fact that we were giving our lives BEFORE going on a mission. We could not face the grave dangers of the job without making that decision beforehand. There was none of this “failure is not an option” silliness you hear among civilian bystanders. Nobody wants to die in battle, but death is part of the battle. The goal is to accomplish the mission, and injury and death are part of the process. Anyone unwilling to pay that cost was not appropriate for the mission. Just read some quotes from our founding fathers, or military leaders over the life of our nation....that’s how it works.

“Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!” Patrick Henry

Paul said it well; **Philippians 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.** To the warrior, living is not the reward; living eternally with Christ IS the reward! Re-read John 6:63 **The Spirit gives life; the flesh profits nothing.**

Jesus does not want us ‘dying for a cause.’ He wants us “dying to self” so that we may pursue HIS CAUSE! The old person has got to go: the one that only wants a free meal....the one with the gooey center.

Make no mistake; we are NOT first century Rome. Yes, we are to respect authority, but in America, the government serves at the will of the people, and NOT the other way around! The Church has a voice in our society....if we use it. The Scriptures describe us “like sheep.” We are **NEVER** instructed to BE LIKE sheep.

“It is when a people forget God that tyrants forge their chains.” Patrick Henry

There is a process in between forgetting God and the forging of chains; a period of idolatry. God’s people fall away and flow with the tide of society.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Colossians 2:6-9 Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily,

[Phil Cooke, Ph.D](#) “The Christian Church has to come to terms with the fact that while its role in leading American culture may be over, it’s voice at the table is not. That doesn’t mean we side-step issues that matter, but we speak the truth in a way that engages rather than condemns. In a media-driven culture, perception matters. Two thousand years ago, an obscure, marginal group following the teachings of Jesus became the dominant religious force in the Western world. They didn’t have political power, an army or vast wealth. But through their lifestyle, their relationships and their actions, they changed the perception of Rome, and eventually impacted the world.”

Again....John 6: 65 Then Jesus said, **“This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless the Father has granted it to him.”** In the company of those who are called, there is no room for bystanders.

We never want to be a part of an unruly, violent mob. But, we should never, ever, foment and support their evil by being a MOB OF BYSTANDERS!

Psalm 20:7-8 Some boast in chariots and some in horses,
But we will boast in the name of the Lord, our God.
They have bowed down and fallen, but we have risen and stood upright.

Amen