

Session 6 Kingdom Impact: Being Salt and Light

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

If you would, open in your Bibles to Matthew 5. Father, we thank You for the Word of God and I ask You, Holy Spirit, for inspiration in the speaking and hearing of Your Word. I ask You for living understanding. I ask You to magnify Jesus in our heart right now; in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Well, for those who are joining us for the first time, we're in a series on the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7. And I gave these teaching notes; we're only going to cover part of them today, so the others are just some verses for you to look up on your own time.

In our last session we looked at the Beatitudes. There are eight Beatitudes, which are the highpoint of the Sermon on the Mount in terms of what Jesus is after in our character and our response to the grace of God. Now in calling us to respond to the Beatitudes, in the very next verse Jesus says, "You're the salt of the earth and you're the light of the world" (Mt. 5:13-16, paraphrased). And it's important that we connect this very well-known passage of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world to the passage immediately before it, which is the eight Beatitudes. Because Jesus is calling for a response to those Beatitudes, and He's motivating us by telling us the remarkable privilege we have. As weak and broken people we're called by the Lord to be His conduits, His vessels in the world. We're salt and light. We're the change agents through history, the Body of Christ. We're His first and primary plan to transform the nations.

Now we look at our lives and we think we're so weak and we don't have that much to offer. And the Lord says, "Trust Me, I've called you and I've arranged My kingdom this way. I won't transform the earth apart from you. I'm going to do it through you. You respond to Me according to these eight Beatitudes and through My grace I'll do the work through you."

THE CONDUITS THAT JESUS USES THROUGHOUT HISTORY

Now in this passage, Matthew 5:13-20, or even right here in Matthew 5:13-14, He gives two remarkable privileges and two warnings. Again, this is in response to motivating us to walk out the eight Beatitudes.

Now the two privileges I've already mentioned: we're the salt of the earth and the light of the world. I'm talking about the Body of Christ throughout history. We're the vessels; we're the conduits that Jesus would use throughout history to make God known in the world and to transform society. And then He gives two warnings after each one of the promises; let's just read it.

Verse 13. This is a remarkable statement: "You are the salt of the earth" (Mt. 5:13). Now we know that the number one issue with salt in the ancient world was that it prevented decay. That was the primary use of salt. There are about eight or nine different uses of salt in the Bible. However, the primary use in the ancient world was preserving meat, because there was no refrigeration and the meat would spoil and decay. This could be prevented by packing salt into the meat. And everyone understood this metaphor: if you were salt, you would prevent decay, and you would be that which made people hungry and thirsty for God. "I will work through you, and people will be thirsty and hungry for God as the salt of the earth."

And then He gives the warning. He says, “Beware, though! This privilege is so awesome, that you would be the vessel to stop decay in the world, but know this: if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It will be good for nothing” (Mt. 5:14, paraphrased). He’s speaking spiritually. We will be good for nothing in making a spiritual impact if we lose our saltiness.

Now this particular translation, the New King James says, “If the salt loses its flavor” (Mt. 5:14, NKJV). Most translations say, “If the salt loses its saltiness,” and I believe that’s the word that’s best there, *saltiness*. If we lose our saltiness, how will we be effective? We will be good for nothing spiritually. The way we lose our saltiness is by determining that we don’t want to live the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle, and that we want to be salty another way. The Lord says, “If you don’t find your saltiness this way, there’s no other way.”

You lose it by rejecting the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle, which many believers do; they do it with their lips, but not with their life. They say, “No, I’m not really going in that direction. By the grace of God I’m going in a different direction”—which is a false use of grace, of course. However Jesus is saying, “Beware! The only saltiness you have in being the light of the world is in this context.”

Then He goes on to the second great privilege. He says, “Not only are you the salt of the earth; you’re the light of the world” (Mt. 5:15, paraphrased).

“You’ll be My primary means to bring My direction to the earth. I will bring understanding of God through you. You’ll represent God to the nations, to your neighbors, to your family.”

And light-bearers, those who would bear light: it’s more than information—it’s more than the fact that we would be used to give direction and understanding of God and understanding of the message of Jesus, as important as that is. However, because God is light and that’s part of the essence of who He is—He *is* light, and Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (Jn. 8:12). The issue of God’s light has a supernatural dimension of imparting the power of God. Therefore when we talk about light and we associate it with God and the power of the Spirit, there’s not just an impartation of information, but of power as well. He’s saying to born-again believers, “You will be the vessels in which I will bring living understanding. I will bring information from God through you to the nations, and I will also impart My power.” Because light has more than information; it also has power.

DON’T BURY YOUR CANDLE UNDERNEATH A BASKET

Then He gives the warning in verse 15: He says, “Don’t put the light under a basket” (Mt. 5:15, paraphrased)—or a bushel. Now we miss the meaning of that warning, because when we think of turning on a lamp, we think of hitting the switch, but of course in the ancient world they didn’t flip the switch, and the light went on because the light was an oil lamp. And they were typically very small oil lamps that they could carry in their hand. And what it meant is lighting the wick so that the oil would burn; and then you would carry the lamp around the house. Typically there were some standing lamps, but most lamps were mobile that they carried by hand in a house.

And so what Jesus is saying is that if you light that lamp, that little lamp, you can carry it in your hand or you can put it under a basket; but if you do that, not only will the light not be seen, but the fire will go out. It will suffocate the flame.

And so what He's saying is this: "You're the light of the world, but it's important that you don't hide the light; that you take a public stand for what you believe. And secondly, that you don't allow the fire in your life to be extinguished"—because this was as much about putting the fire out as it was hiding the light when you put an oil lamp under a basket.

Now in the same way that we can lose our saltiness by rejecting the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle and refusing the message of Jesus, we place our lamps under bushels by hiding them and letting the fire go out.

And so Jesus is actually still talking about the eight Beatitudes. He's saying, "Don't look for another method to be light-bearers"; and for those who would be salt, He says, "This is the way forward." He ties together the privilege of being salt and light and being used by the Lord in this unique way. I mean, the Body of Christ is the only vehicle in the earth that has this awesome privilege to represent God and to be dispensers of His power and to stop decay in society. And so He's telling the believers, "You need to embrace these eight Beatitudes. There's no Plan B."

However, it's not just an issue of embracing the lifestyle and the character of the Sermon on the Mount. Because the eight Beatitudes would then incorporate the entire Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6, and 7, which is an explanation of how to walk out the eight Beatitudes. And there's another issue that's involved in maintaining our saltiness and maintaining the brightness and the shining of our lamp: it's our commitment to be faithful to the message of Jesus.

Now the message of Jesus isn't just, "You can have free forgiveness"; some people reduce what Jesus came to say to offering people free forgiveness. Well, that's the introduction to the message. Jesus has a lot to say about a lot of issues of life. He's the truth. And as light-bearers we represent His truth and we don't hide our stand under a bushel. We make a public stand, whether between two and three in the workplace, or in the neighborhood, or in the home; we stand for what Jesus stands for.

Now many believers believe things privately, and they hide their light under a bushel, and Jesus says, "No, no I don't want it under a bushel; I want you to own it. I want you to stand for it." Jesus has very strong positions on a lot of things in Scripture. And when we stand for Jesus, we stand for the message that He gives. We're to be faithful witnesses of the truth if we're to be salty and to be light-bearers.

TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD ACCORDING TO HIS IMAGE IN JESUS

We tell the truth about God. Now a lot of people love people, but it's a god after their own image. They don't love the God of Jesus. That God troubles them. He's too narrow. We tell the truth about God according to Jesus. We tell the truth about salvation. He says, "There's only one way. All of the other ways are wrong; they end up in hell."

And people say, "Whoa! Jesus, let's not be so intense!" We tell Jesus' version of sin. We take a stand on morality according to what He says, not according to the popular religious sentiment. And the Church is taking less and less of a stand with Jesus on those issues. We take a stand on how Jesus defines judgment; how He defines success; what justice is and what the future looks like. In this age and the age to come we're witnesses of the truth of Jesus. Not just the free message of salvation, but rather the whole message of Jesus. I'm talking about His main points that He makes known in the Scriptures.

THE PRIMARY VESSELS THROUGH WHICH THE NATIONS ARE TRANSFORMED

Now this is, again, a most remarkable privilege, that we weak and broken people throughout history are the primary strategy for God to transform the nations in this age and then in fullness in the age to come. I mean, the Lord Jesus is saying to these uneducated fisherman and to the mostly poor people who are listening to Him, “You’re not only My first choice; you’re My only choice. I don’t have a Plan B. I’m not going to change the earth apart from you. I won’t bypass you. I will use you, but on My terms; according to how I say. You must say yes to the character of the Sermon on the Mount. You must say yes to My message, and you must stand for it even when it’s unpopular.”

That’s number two. Number one is godly character, and number two is the message. Number three: we give demonstration of the truth with our deeds, both practical deeds of service and supernatural deeds of praying for the sick, prophesying, casting out devils, etc.

LIVING FOR THE TRUTH, STANDING FOR THE MESSAGE, AND WORKING RIGHTEOUSNESS

Let me say it again, one, two, three: how we maintain our saltiness, how we keep the fire and the light in our life burning and shining rather than hiding it under a bushel and putting it out.

Number one: we live for the truth; our character is molded by the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle, which isn’t popular in the Church.

Number two: we stand for the message of Jesus, the whole message of Jesus, not just the free forgiveness part; and Jesus’ message troubles the Church. The Sermon on the Mount lifestyle is what for years I’ve called “the fasted lifestyle.” We’re living in God-ordained restraints by the grace of God in self-denial, grace-empowered discipline and grace empowered self-denial as Jesus taught. That’s all part of His message. We stand for that message and its implications in the realms of justice, judgment, sin, righteousness, morality and all of the issues that are connected to it. And then thirdly, we demonstrate the truth with practical deeds and with supernatural deeds. Whether we’re praying for the sick or helping our neighbor, we back up our godly life and our proclamation with deeds.

Jesus is saying, “If you do those three things, no matter how weak you are, the poor, illiterate peasants of history, you’ll be My agents for change in the earth. This is My strategy. I refuse to bypass you. You’re My number one, and you’re My only choice in changing the nations in this unique way, through being vessels of truth.”

Therefore as salt we resist decay in society and we resist it in our own life. And as light we resist darkness in our own life, taking a stand against it and bringing light to society. We don’t yield to decay and darkness; we resist it in our character, in our words, and in our deeds.

Paragraph B. I just want you to know how I’m approaching this session when you might look at some of the notes later. I’m approaching this passage of Scripture in a personal way, as though Jesus were answering questions that the disciples might have asked.

Now these are unspoken questions. Actually, these are my questions: I’ve just inserted them into the text. And so Jesus has just talked on the eight Beatitudes, and in the final beatitude, in verses 10-12, He talked about persecution. He said, “Now you have to know, this lifestyle isn’t popular, and the message isn’t popular. You’ll

be resisted.” And we find throughout history that we’re resisted in and outside of the Church for being faithful to the message. I’m talking about the Body of Christ throughout history.

And so I imagine one of the disciples saying, “OK, we’ll embrace this intense lifestyle, this costly lifestyle summed up in the eight Beatitudes.” And I mean, it’s costly to our flesh. “Is it going to be worth the effort? Will it help anyone besides us?”

Now we know it will help us personally because eight times in a row Jesus said “Blessed are... blessed are...” “Blessed are the meek, blessed are the pure, blessed are the merciful.”

They say, “I know I’ll be blessed, but I want to know, Jesus, if I live this costly, sacrificial life and I bear persecution for it, will it impact anyone else? Will it matter to anyone else that I do this?” Because, it’s common to many of us; we want to be a change agent in the grace of God in our generation.

Paragraph C. And so I imagine Jesus saying, “Yes, good question.” Again, I inserted the question into the text. It will be worth it, and it will bless more than just you, as I’ve declared eight times. Yes, you’ll be used to touch others. And, more than that, you’ll transform the nations in the earth itself. Yes, it will make a difference. This demanding lifestyle will have an impact on others.”

“THE WEAPONS OF OUR WARFARE . . . ARE MIGHTY IN GOD”

Paragraph D. Now here’s what about I mean being qualified to make this great change. We have spiritual weapons, and the good news about these spiritual weapons is that they’re accessible to everyone. Poor, uneducated fishermen, the illiterate peasants of history who said yes to Jesus through the generations have access to these spiritual weapons, meaning everyone can do this.

EVEN THE SMALLEST PERSON CAN CHANGE THE COURSE OF THE WORLD

Here are the weapons: godly character—saying yes to the eight Beatitudes: the poor of the earth can do that, the uneducated can do it, saying yes to the message. Taking a stand where Jesus stands, and that’s more difficult than it seems, because we become accustomed to standing for free forgiveness, economic blessing, good circumstances, some healing, and hanging in there when it’s tough. And we kind of end the message there, but it’s far bigger than that. Therefore our weapons are these: godly character, taking stands for the message and demonstrating our convictions by our deeds: again, practical service, as well as supernatural deeds, laying hands on the sick, etc., etc.

The proof that it works for anyone is that these uneducated fishermen and those around them changed the world in their generation. I have here a quote by Martin Luther. Martin Luther was resisted by so many in Germany in the 1500s as he led the great Protestant Reformation from Germany. The armies of Europe stood against him. And this is what he said: “With God’s Word I can be more defiant and boastful than they with all their swords and guns”—just by speaking His Word! Now we might have asked Martin to throw a little humility in there, too, but I get the point because he was talking about not cowering before the threats of the armies of Europe. When he said he was boastful, he meant, “I can be bold; I don’t have to draw back at all.”

THE WHEAT AND THE TARES MATURE TOGETHER AT THE END OF THE AGE

Now our call to be salt and light is the call to impact society. We impact society in this age. And that impact is increasing and will continue to increase until the Lord returns. And when the Lord returns He will bring the impact to a new, dynamic level.

However, here's the good news: the impact that we make in this age, which is increasing, will have continuity to our lives and to our impact in the age to come. Now that's another subject for another time, but my point is this: there are two positions in the Church about our impact in society and I believe both of them are wrong. These are two very popular positions.

We have the idea, "Well, things are going to get worse and worse, so why polish the brass on a sinking ship? Why bother impacting society if it's all going to decay anyway?" Millions of believers buy into that: "Why polish the brass of a sinking ship? Let's just evangelize, and let's not worry about being salt and light and transforming society."

That's a very popular position, but I believe a very non-biblical position. The other non-biblical position is on the far other extreme, that it's going to get better and better until all of society is Christianized, and when everything is Christianized and victory triumphs in fullness, then Jesus will return. That's a non-biblical position as well. The biblical position is that the light is going to get lighter but the darkness is going to get darker, and they'll both increase simultaneously and come to fullness in the generation the Lord returns. And Jesus said in Matthew 13:30 that the wheat and the tares, the good and the bad, would both mature together at the end of the age.

And so we have great advances, but we don't have the full victory until the Lord returns. However, there's continuity in our labors in this age and our life and our labors in the age to come. Again, that's another subject for another time.

WE HAVE TO BE TRUE TO THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF OUR LIFESTYLE IN GOD

However, our call, and this glorious privilege to be salt and light, depends upon us maintaining our distinctiveness. Meaning there's a very distinct Sermon on the Mount lifestyle that the world doesn't buy into, and that much of the Church doesn't buy into. We can't dumb down the lifestyle to relate to people better; we have to be true to the distinction.

And the second area of distinction is the messaging: we can't just put the message in the back and pretend like we agree with all of them in all of their ways. And we think the message isn't really important as long as we connect with them and they like us; then we'll sneak Jesus in there sooner or later.

Now I don't believe that in every relationship the first thing you do is tell them about Jesus. I believe that relationships grow and there's opportunity that's legitimate. And when we meet with someone who's entrenched in a particular sin or a particular point of view, our first conversation isn't to confront that issue. Our first conversation about the Lord is to invite them into relationship and to tell the glory of the potential relationship and how He feels about them and how He loves them. And as they respond to that, we say, "Let me tell you: He's so loving, this is what He says about sexuality. He's so loving, this is what He says about judgment. This is what He says about justice. This is His position because He cares so much."

The reason I say that is because some people, in the name of wanting to be faithful to the message, meet this person entrenched in a sexual addiction or some other kind of addiction, or someone entrenched in a certain lifestyle, and they feel mandated that the first thing they have to say is, “You can’t be a drug dealer and walk with God!”

Well, we can bring the drug dealer thing up in a minute. Let’s tell them about Jesus first. “Well you know, I want to make sure I get it in there!”

“Well, it doesn’t have to be the first thing. When God first talked to you He didn’t talk to you about all of your sins; He talked about how He felt about you and the potential to relate to Him.”

And so as I’m talking about being faithful to the message, I’m talking about in the context of how Jesus did it.

WE CAN’T NEGOTIATE ON THE TRUTH AND BE FAITHFUL TO WHAT JESUS SAYS

However, a lot of folks draw back on the distinctives in the name of relating to people. They say, “Let’s not really ever be straightforward about where we stand.”

And the Lord says, “If you do that, your salt has lost its saltiness. You’re an oil lamp that’s under a bushel. The fire went out in the lamp and so did the light. You won’t make any impact; no matter how sincere you are, it won’t work. You have to do it My way.”

Now the teachings of Jesus are very offensive to the mind. Not all of His teachings; some of them are very attractive to the mind—I mean, who doesn’t like free forgiveness? I’ll take that any day! Are you kidding? However, that’s not the whole message. His message and His values are so different. And I believe that Jesus’ full message isn’t welcomed in the Church at large in our nation. Certainly there are thousands of congregations in the land that are being true to the message. However, mostly the Church talks about the positive and completely hides the negative. And that’s not being salt and light.

We don’t have the option to negotiate on what Jesus says. If He says it, we say it. If He doesn’t say it, we don’t say it. We’re loyal to Him; that’s where salt and light operates.

WE HAVE TO BE AGAINST THE WORLD, YET FOR THE WORLD

Now C. S. Lewis popularized a phrase; he called it “resistance thinking.” He said, “We have to develop resistance thinking.” Even in the Church, when the popular tide of religious sentiment rises in the Church, we have to challenge the status quo and compare that which is popular with that which is biblical. And if we find that it’s not biblical, no matter how popular it is, we need to have a mindset that’s not afraid to challenge the status quo that has the momentum of popularity, that everyone is buying into. We have to be resistance thinkers. We have to make sure it’s faithful to Scripture.

It’s a paradox: we have to be against the world, yet for the world. The Body of Christ as salt and light is the number one champion *for* the cities in the nations of the earth. As the Body of Christ we have more insight into the destiny and the dignity of cities and nations. And we’re calling out for it and we’re working for it and we’re sacrificing our lives that cities, nations, and people groups would enter into their full dignity and destiny. We’re for the world. We have more insight and we’re the champions declaring how far they can go in God. And at the

same time we're against the world. We're testifying of the resistance against the God of love that's in the nations.

Now it's easier to be one or the other, but the believers that are salt and light are both. We can't reduce Jesus' teachings to make them comfortable. We have to stand where He stands. I mean, even today the one way to salvation makes people nervous. The reality of hell and the idea of judgment in the nations and increasing judgment causes us to say, "Let's put that Jesus in the back room when the neighbors come over"—the Jesus who taught self-denial. "Well, that hasn't really worked that well in our Western culture. I mean, it's OK if we talk about a guy in a biography, but not really us, today, in our culture."

Beloved, that's His message. We have to bear witness to it. We can't minimize the difficult parts or the parts that are difficult to our natural thinking.

OUR MESSAGE IS BOTH WORLD-AFFIRMING AND WORLD-DENYING

Paragraph two. Our message—I'm saying the same thing—is both world-affirming and world-denying. As we preach the implications of the scandal of the cross, the cross in its two applications is a scandal to mankind.

The first application of the Cross isn't that we just have free forgiveness; again, people like that. The message is bigger. Only by relating to the Man who died on a cross can the nations be cured; only on His terms and under His leadership. "Oooo, a guy who died on a cross is the answer to the transformation of America, Europe, and the nations?"

Yes, there's no other answer. There are secondary answers that come into the solution of fixing all the problems, but it begins with loyalty and coming under the leadership of the Man who went to the cross.

"I don't know about that! That's a little too narrow." That's scandalous to the natural mind, but that's the only way forward.

Well, even more difficult than that is the second application of the cross. Jesus calls every one of His disciples to bear the cross of self-denial in their life. He says, "If you don't do this, you're not My disciple, no matter what popular preaching tells you. You're not My disciple if you don't bear the cross and walk in grace and power and self-denial in your life according to the way I taught it."

And so we have this two-fold message: we're proclaiming what God has called the world to be in all of its destiny, dignity, and glory, but at the same time we're declaring what the world has become in its depravity and we're preaching the cross as the central message.

DON'T BLEND IN TO WIN THEM, BECAUSE THEY'LL WIN YOU

Paragraph C. Now this is really important, particularly for young people but for old people as well. It's this idea of "blending" into the secular scene. A lot of believers are talking about crossing over; I've heard this for twenty, thirty years and not just in the last year or two, and particularly in the subject of the arts: music, drama, fashion, media, movies, the realm of the arts; and make no mistake about it, we're called to invade that realm of society as salt and light witnesses of Jesus. There's no question about that.

However, here's where the deception comes in: people want to become like them so that they can win them, and that's a deception. That's anti-biblical, and Jesus would say, "Don't you dare do that! You'll lose your saltiness!"

And so I've talked to young people over the years, and they say: "OK I want to get involved in the secular music scene, relate to them, and bring them to Jesus."

And I say, "That's good, but here's what I want to ask you: are you going to stand openly for the eight Beatitudes as the lifestyle that God approves? I'm talking about purity, about morality, about His view of life, death, abortion, sexuality, money; are you going to stand for that?"

"Well, eventually..."

"No, no, no, don't go there; don't blend in to win them, because they'll win you. I've watched it for decades. I watched thirty years of people blending in to win and they get won over. Their light goes out—it's under a bushel—and their salt loses its saltiness." And they weren't salt and light; they just lost their testimony.

If you go into those arenas, particularly the arts, you have to maintain your distinctive lifestyle and your distinctive message, or you're deceiving yourself. If you're going to move into that realm, hold fast to the biblical standard of morality and the biblical standard of modesty.

Someone says, "Well, if I do the modesty thing, I won't fit in anywhere!"

There you have it! If you can't do Jesus in your clothing, in your speech, and in your morals, then you can't bring Jesus to people who aren't receiving it."

Well, I was saying this last night and Wes Hall, who's a lawyer, said, "If you think it's bad in the arts, it's really bad in the law department. It's way worse there."

And I thought, "Well, it's probably the medical, the law, the business, the restaurant industry... fixing highways on the construction team is probably the same way."

My point is this: we're called to invade every sphere of society and to challenge the culture, but in doing so we don't blend in to be like them to win them. We maintain our distinctiveness or we don't go there until we're prepared to. We don't venture out as missionaries until we're sure about the message and our lifestyle. And we have to be doing it in our private life.

I mean, you can't be struggling with pornography in your private life and then going into the art, music, and fashion industry to hold the standard for purity. Don't do that just yet; give it a little more time before you invade that sphere of society.

"A CITY THAT IS SET ON A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN"

Well, Jesus gives even greater implications of where this is going. Let's read Matthew 5:14 again. He says, "You are the light of the world"; but here He brings another dimension of potential. He says, "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden" (Mt. 5:14). I mean, it's one thing for you to be light and salt to the people around you, to two or three people, or to ten or twenty. And those are typically the numbers that people impact: that's

the way it works, because that's God's will. It's not like you're not salt and light unless you touch thousands. No, touch twos and threes: start in your home and in the marketplace and in your neighborhood; twos and threes, tens and twenties is what you want to be thinking.

And it's not just an issue of individual lights maintaining this godly character and Sermon on the Mount lifestyle, being faithful witnesses to the whole message of Jesus and following it up with demonstrations of deeds, both practical and supernatural. We do that as individuals, but if a bunch of people do it together then we're a city set on a hill that can't be ignored. It can't be missed; whether they like it or not, the city or region will see it. They can't miss a whole bunch of lights in unity together.

Just recently I met with some pastors in the area. I asked them to lunch and I said, "Hey, I have this vision: what if ten or twenty churches all worked together in Grandview and decided that we were going to—by name, specifically—take care of every single fatherless child in this town? Wherever there's a child without a father in the home, we'll get involved in that family. We'll locate them together. What if we located every widow, believer or unbeliever, and we go and adopt them? I mean, ten or twenty churches working together. What if together we worked on the Grandview school systems...?" And I listed about ten different things and there was a lot of enthusiasm.

And there's a way we can do it, and I'm not even going to get into it right now, where we're not even mentioning different congregations or personalities. There's a way to do it. And then as a city, I mean a whole bunch of believers from different congregations are joined together in a concerted effort where the majority—not all—are saying yes to the Sermon on the Mount, not all. The majority are saying yes to the message of Jesus—not just salvation and forgiveness but the whole message. And the majority are willing to follow it up with deeds practical and supernatural. Beloved we will be a lamp, we will be like a city on a hill that can't be ignored by the region—can't be. Some won't like it, others will, and others will just be perplexed by it, but it can't be ignored. Jesus said it.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IS THE GREAT PERMISSION TO ACT IN THE NAME OF JESUS

Well, in verse 15 He reminds us that men don't light a lamp and set it under a basket. Again, it's the oil lamp with the wick inside; if you put it under a basket, the flame will go out and the light won't be seen.

Paragraph A. Now I think of the Holy Spirit; I'm using that phrase "light a lamp" and I'm applying it to the Holy Spirit in our lives. I want to urge you to ask the Holy Spirit, "Lord, give me divine ideas for service. You're really smart. You know everyone and You know everything; give me some ideas of how to serve."

Don't wait until you find the idea on the church organizational chart. For thirty years people have said to me, "I don't know where I fit in the church," and what they mean is on the org chart. Well, most of the ministries in the Body of Christ don't fit on a church org chart. Maybe 10 percent—I don't know the real number, but a small percentage fits on the org chart. Most of these are Holy Spirit-initiated ministries throughout the community.

And we need to ask people, "Holy Spirit what do You want me to do and who do You want me to reach out to?" You don't have to ask anyone's permission. You don't have to get a meeting with the pastors and say, "Hey can I do this?" The Great Commission is the great permission. You're already commanded to go do it.

One of the young women here in our congregation, Stevetta, is in her early thirties, and she saw ten twelve-year-old kids out the window at the bus stop.

Every morning they're at the bus stop to go to junior high. And so the Holy Spirit nudges her; she walks out there and says, "Hi, my name is Stevetta."

They look at her like, "What do you want?"

"I want to pray with you."

Well, I imagine eight of these ten children are boys. I can imagine them saying, "Not here! Not on my watch!"

But she went out every morning. After a couple of weeks they started warming up to her, and now she has been doing it for nearly a year, every single morning. And now every single time, without exception, they pray before the bus comes: they want to pray for the soccer time, and the girlfriend, and doing well in school, but then they get into the personal stuff about home life, problems, crisis. And they don't pray but they ask her to and she does and they listen. And now she's been doing it every morning for almost a year; she's their pastor.

Now some of the moms have come to check out who this woman is. "We heard you're from IHOP-KC; what do you guys do over there?" And now the moms have given her the good seal of approval. They like it, and so she has been doing this for a year.

Now we're not going to find bus stop ministry on the church org chart; it's not going to happen. Another lady is eighty-five. About a year ago she said, "Lord, I have some years left. I want to witness to some people." So she did something similar, but different: she made cookies a few times a week. She goes out on her porch and the neighborhood kids come at the same time and on the same days; it's not every day, but several times a week. And she has this little community of ten-, twelve-, and thirteen-year olds, and the moms come and check it out. And you want the moms to come and check it out; that's good. As a matter of fact, it's better to go tell the moms on the front end. She talks to them and tells them stories, they eat for ten minutes—they eat their cookies—and then they run. She's been doing it for a while; she's their pastor.

But we're not going to have "cookie on the front porch ministry" on the church org chart; it's not going to happen. Ask the Holy Spirit, "What do You want me to do? Light my lamp!"

SHOW UP AND SPEAK UP WITH CONSISTENCY AND HUMILITY

However, here's the issue: if He lights your lamp—and I'm using that phrase in kind of a strange way—if He lights your lamp in that way, you have to be faithful to follow through. Why? Because here's what happens.

What happens down at the bus stop ministry the first week is exciting: you know, you think about it, you're telling your friends, it's novel and it's new. But you go down there a year later, and it's freezing out—when it's ten degrees in January, she's out there freezing. She stayed up late the night before, but she gets up anyway and goes out there. You think, "Why am I doing this?"

I mean, 99.9 percent of all ministries in history are really small. That's God's way, so don't despise it. Don't wait for something big to do it. Do the twos and threes and let it grow to tens and twenties and ebb and flow between the two and twenty. The problem is, it's little, it's routine, it's mundane, it's tiring: will you stay with

it? That's part of not putting your light under a bushel; it means you stay with it. The kids at the bus stop see you. In their case, your light shining before men means the twelve-year-old guys at the bus stop. Show up and serve them. It doesn't mean brag about your ministry; let your light shine before men. It means speak the truth and serve where people are actually interacting with you. Do it, not just in your imagination or in your prayer closet; actually do it in real life before real people. That's what it means to shine before men.

Some people think, "Well you know, Jesus told us in verse 5 to be meek and here in verse 16 He's telling us to boast!" He's saying show up and speak up, and do it consistently and do it with humility.

EMPOWERED BY GRACE TO WALK IN RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE HEART

Let's look at the bottom of Page 3. Verses 17 and 18. Now I imagine that the disciples say, "OK, we're in." And again, these are my own questions that I'm inserting into the dialogue. "So we will be salt and light. We will change the nations. Awesome! And we will obey the Sermon on the Mount. We will be faithful to the message. We will follow it up with deeds. OK, good.

"Here's my question, Jesus: how far is this thing going? I mean, are we just going to touch Grandview? How much will we touch Grandview? Are we going to touch Kansas City? Are we going to touch the whole earth? What are we going to touch? How far is it going with the whole Body of Christ? How serious are You, Jesus, to this commitment to transform the nations through weak people as salt and light?"

And Jesus gives His answer in Matthew 5:17. He says, "Don't think for one moment that I will minimize any of the promises in My prophets. I will do what I said in the prophets: I will fill the earth with My glory. I'm taking this to the end, to the full degree. And don't think for a minute that I will minimize in the grace of God My requirement for My people to say yes to righteousness" (Mt. 5:17).

If righteousness in the Old Testament had one level of expression, in the New Testament with the indwelling Spirit we can do righteousness on the outside and righteousness on the inside. Jesus said, "Know this: I'm coming in the whole dimension of grace to empower you to walk in greater righteousness from the heart"—which He then goes and explains in the next verses. "And then I will bring salt and light to every single part of the earth for My glory will cover the earth. Go read Isaiah; go read the prophets. Yes I will bring it to fullness."

WHAT ROLE WILL WE HAVE IN THE KINGDOM IN THE AGE TO COME?

We come to the last verse. I'll be brief on this and leave you with the notes to read. Now I imagine the disciples saying, "OK, salt and light... I've got it. You'll bring righteousness to fullness, but You'll bring transformation to fullness in all the nations"—salt and light. "Got it! This thing is big and You're going to use us—whoa! Your main strategy in history is the Body of Christ. This is exciting; my life has meaning here!

"OK, now what about me? Individually, me? What place will I have in Your kingdom—not just all the nations, but me?"

And the Lord answers, "Well, what role do you want in My kingdom?"

"Well, I want the biggest role I can have, whatever it is! I want to know what my role is in this age, but what about the age to come? What place will I have? Not necessarily what function but what place?"

Now we all ask the question, “What role or place do we have in this age in the kingdom?” but very few ask what role or place they’ll have in the age to come.

And that’s the answer Jesus gives: He skips to the age to come because it’s clear from other passages which I have even here in the notes that our role and place in the kingdom that men see in this age is mostly very small and with very few things. We minister to twos and threes and tens and twenties and the Lord says, “That’s good.” That doesn’t satisfy a lot of people but it satisfies the Lord because that’s how He runs His kingdom. Most of what we do in this age is small. Therefore Jesus doesn’t answer that question that I’m imposing on the text, I admit. However, He says, “I’ll tell you about the role and place you’ll have in the age to come: how about that? Because it lasts a lot longer anyway.”

“OK.”

THE MOST IGNORED WARNING OF JESUS TO THE CHURCH IN THE WHOLE BIBLE

Now I consider verse 19 the most ignored warning of Jesus to the Church in the whole Bible. It’s the most ignored warning that Jesus gave to the born-again church. And I consider verse 19 the most ignored promise that Jesus gave the born-again church. This verse gives us this terrifying warning and this glorious promise, but it’s mostly completely ignored by the Church; and this is mainstream Sermon on the Mount teaching of Jesus; this isn’t some side teaching.

Let’s look at it for a moment. Jesus starts off in verse 19: “Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments that I’ve been talking about and emboldens men to break them. . .” (Mt. 5:19, paraphrased). “Yes, he’s born again and he will have a resurrected body, but he will be least in My kingdom in the age to come. I’ll love him equally but he will be least; in terms of stature and function and authority he will be least. I’ll love him equally but he will be least in those other ways.”

Again, it doesn’t matter if they’re famous. They could have the biggest TV ministry where millions are listening to them in this age. It doesn’t matter how famous and popular they are if they break the least of these commandments consistently, because we all break them occasionally. He means that if they don’t care about them and they just ignore those commandments; and they embolden other people to do it and they teach others to ignore the commands of God under the banner of grace teaching. It’s this thing I talk about walk after week, this distorted message of grace that’s a false teaching. It’s true, Jesus will give you free salvation, but in terms of lifestyle it’s a distorted teaching. But it fills the land! These men, these born-again teachers, are emboldening people to ignore part of God’s commandments: self-denial, discipline, prayer, fasting, giving, humility—these things that aren’t pleasing to the flesh. They call it the grace of God; they say, “I’m into grace,” as though Jesus’ teaching on self-denial was anti-grace because Jesus didn’t get it.

Jesus said “If that’s what they do, they’ll be least in My kingdom. I love them. Maybe they’re popular now, but it will be different then” (Mt. 5:19b, paraphrased).

THE GREAT GOD DESIGNED YOUR SPIRIT TO LONG FOR GREATNESS

And so let’s go to the other extreme: the poorest, the most ungifted, the most unlearned. The guy has no following; he has nothing happening in his circumstances, but he seeks to walk out these beatitudes and he makes them known whenever he has opportunity. Because all of us have a teaching ministry; most of our teaching ministry is in twos and threes, but it’s a teaching ministry.

And so this unknown man, with very few gifts, with no money, with no education, with no following, completely ignored by everyone, is trying to obey these eight Beatitudes and their implications throughout the New Testament. And he teaches them. He only has one person at a time. He tells the bus driver; no one else will listen to him but he teaches them.

He will get the shock of his life when in the age to come the Lord says to that man or to that woman, “What you did I consider great in My eyes.” And there will be implications in terms of their role and their position and their function.

Now someone says, “Ooh, Jesus is calling us to be great in verse 19—how can He do that? Because in verse 5 He told us to be humble and now He tells us to be great! Is He contradicting Himself?”

No, beloved; God designed our spirit to long for greatness. You can’t repent of the desire to be great. You can only repent of seeking it in the wrong way.

The great God designed your spirit to long for greatness. If you don’t long for greatness, something is shut down and broken. We just have to do it in the right way through humility and servanthood; at the right time, in the age to come; before the right eyes, the Lord. We just have to do it in the right way.

I’m into greatness. I’m taking this seriously. I’m teaching this series because I’m trying to get ahead. I’m going to push you on this. I love you and I want you to do it. However, I’ve got a little something in it for me. OK, I believe this verse.

IT’S NOT ABOUT THE SIZE OF YOUR CALLING, BUT THE SIZE OF YOUR HEART

Paragraph B. God invites anyone into greatness, and it has nothing to do with the size of your accomplishments in this age. It has to do with the size of your heart response. You could have no accomplishments, but you’re going after this at the heart level. You’ll be great.

Paragraph C. Whoever does and teaches it. Again, most of our teaching ministry is in twos and threes. It’s in informal settings, but it’s still teaching it’s in your home. I’ve been teaching the Bible on a weekly basis for forty years. I just did the math on that, and my anniversary was a few months ago when I started my weekly Bible study when I was sixteen years old. I was scared to death. My youth leader made me do it. I got up there and I had ten fourteen-year olds every week, or twenty, or whatever the number was. I would get up and I was so scared. I had twenty pages of notes for twenty minutes of preaching. And I ran out of things, to say and I still had two minutes to go after twenty pages. I would get up there and say, “My name... is... Mike Bickle! I’m very glad to be here today!” I was terrified but I started.

Well anyway, that’s not my real point; I just had a memory glitch there. Here’s my point: in forty years of teaching on a regular basis, clearly most of my teaching in forty years is in twos and threes. Yes, I have meetings like this a time or two a week, whatever the number is, but over forty years most of it’s been in twos and threes. It’s at restaurants, in cars, in my home, walking on the street, sitting at a table.

And so my point is, don’t wait for a microphone to think of your teaching ministry; teach in twos and threes, because if you get a microphone you’ll still be teaching mostly in twos and threes. I never graduated from that and I don’t want to.

IF YOU MINIMIZE THE LEAST COMMANDMENT, YOU'LL BE LEAST IN THE KINGDOM

Paragraph D. This is terrifying. I'm just reading D because I did it last night and this morning at the other services just to scare me. No, I mean it just got me. Jesus warned us, "If you minimize the least of My commandments and tell others to do so, you'll be least."

If you minimize the least, you'll be least. I look at that and I say, "Augh!" I don't want to minimize anything.

And again, the way men do it is by saying, "Under the grace of God this is how we're supposed to live" and you can get a following and you can get applause. You can get a lot of people approving it, but I tell you, you're minimizing the commands of God, promoting spiritual laziness and passivity, all in the name of grace.

Paragraph F. I compare our ministry on the earth in this age—this isn't a joke—to an internship. Our ministry on the earth in this age begins in our homes with our families, in our schools, in the marketplace, in friendship circles; our ministry is everything—not just the "ministry org chart" at the local church. Because in your ministry assignment on this earth in your physical, resurrected, material body, you'll have a teaching ministry again. That's a thousand-year assignment.

Beloved, I want to do well in my seventy-year internship, because I want the Lord to see my internship and give me an assignment on the earth in my physical, material, resurrected body. I want an assignment that's a response to faithfulness in this one. My point is, don't get lost in this one: be faithful in little things, and serve others. Follow through on the ideas God gives you. Stand boldly for truth, and walk in the eight Beatitudes, regardless of whether anyone sees it. I tell you, you'll do well in your internship. Billy Graham is in his nineties. He's coming to the end to his internship. He's still an intern. God isn't going to judge Billy Graham and value him on how many stadiums he filled. He's going to judge Billy Graham based on the response of his heart.

Beloved, let's do well in our internship. Let's be salt and light now, and beloved, we will be shocked when we find out that we'll be salt and light forever. There will be different applications to it, but we will always be the vessels and the conduits of His power to the earth.

Amen. Let's stand.