

Be A Light: Love Intentionally

01.30.2022

Turn to Matthew 5

I think today starts

One of the most consequential series'

In the history of WellSpring

I don't say that lightly

And if you've been around a while

You know I don't say that often

But I believe that today starts

One of the most consequential series'

In the history of WellSpring

Read Matthew 5:1-2

Notice:

Jesus went up on the mountainside to teach His disciples

Because of the crowds

But Jesus didn't teach the crowds

I don't think I've ever caught that

I mean, all the movies

And all the paintings

Show Jesus teaching massive crowds

This is a famous work by Carl Heinrich Bloch

From 1890

And most paintings are similar to this

You can find *this* picture on Catholic websites

You can find this picture on Protestant websites

Heck, I found this painting on a Mormon website

But it's not true

Jesus went up on the mountainside to teach His disciples

Because of the crowds

But Jesus didn't teach the crowds

By the way

I'm a dork

Did you notice this little guy here in the corner?

He dumped something on his mom's head

Is that a booger?

And she's praying

Like, "Oh Lord, this boy!"

But look, you've got all these people crowding around

Let's read it again

Read Matthew 5:1-2

Why does that matter?

Well, because if Jesus didn't teach the crowds on the mountain

Why did Matthew mention them?

He wrote, "*When*" Jesus saw the crowds

He went up on a mountainside to teach His disciples

Catch this:

The crowds prompted Jesus

To better prepare His disciples

That's huge

And what did He teach them?

You can follow along in your Bible

He tells them their perspective on life is all off

Do you see that there?

They don't want to be poor in spirit or mourn or meek or hungry & thirsty

But they'll likely find true life

In all sorts of unusual places

He tells them to be merciful

To focus on purity of heart

He asks them to make peace

But not to shy away from persecution

In fact, catch this weird statement in verse 11

Read Matthew 5:11-12

He says when you have it tough

You are joining a long history of men & women

Who had it tough before you

You know, it's getting tougher to be a Christian in America

People's perspectives are changing

Animosity towards the church is growing

Our freedoms will likely be challenged

And in some ways

I hate that

But in other ways

I say bring it on

Because I don't want to get to Heaven

And meet Daniel

And Shadrach, Meshack, and Abednego

To meet Paul and Peter and James

I'll be like the trust fund baby

21st century American Christian

Born with a spiritual silver spoon in my mouth

I mean, don't misunderstand

It's better for our country that Jesus is the centerpiece
But I'm working on my street cred in Heaven

So Jesus says "Rejoice" when it gets tough

OK

And then look at verse 13

Read Matthew 5:13

You are the salt of the earth

When we think of salt

We think of seasoning

Or meltin' the ice off the roads

But in those days

Salt replaced your freezer

Salt preserved meat

So it didn't get funky

Salty Christians

And I'm not talking about Christians with bad attitudes

Salty Christians

Preserve nations

And help cultures not get funky

We're gettin' kinda funky

Let's read on

Read Matthew 5:14-15

You are the light of the world

He says, "A Town"

That's a collection of lights

Right?

"A town built on a hill cannot be hidden"

So you're a light

And a collection of lights

A church

Cannot be hidden

And it shouldn't be

Put it on a stand, He says

To light up the house

And just so we don't miss His bottom line

Read Matthew 5:16

We've titled this message "Be a Light"

Based on this statement from Jesus

And we're going to talk

For the next four weeks

About how to live that out

You may think we're confused

Because the series is called be a light

But this sign says

Everyone

Starting next Sunday

This board will be out in the lobby

And it'll be dark like this

But over time

We're going to leave it up all year

And over time

It'll look more like this

And hopefully

Prayerfully

We'll fill it in over the course of the next months

Here's how this works

This year

As you love and pray and get bold

As you are a light in our community

As we spread the good news of Jesus

To EVERYONE

We'll be a collection of lights

A town on a hill

So as a family

I'm going to ask you to pray, together

For four people or families

Maybe it's a coworker

Maybe it's a neighbor

Maybe it's a family that your kids play baseball together

But I'm going to ask you to pray for them everyday

And if you tell them your story

Your testimony

About what God has done in your life

That next Sunday

No matter how it goes

No matter how they respond

That next Sunday

Your family can turn one of these lights on

Another option

As your family is praying every day for your four

This is for everyone

As your family is praying every day for your four

And you get the opportunity to tell them about Jesus

That next Sunday

No matter how it goes

No matter how they respond

That next Sunday

Your family can turn one of these lights on

A third option

As your family is praying every day for your four

This is for everyone

As your family is praying every day for your four

And you invite them to attend church with you

And they come

But it doesn't matter if they like the service or not

No matter how they respond to the service

You just got them here

That next Sunday

Your family can turn one of these lights on

As we prepare to wrap up here

I want us to consider Jesus' words

From Matthew 16:24:

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me."

I had a new thought recently

It wasn't like new information, new thought

It was more like

I had never really considered that before

You know what I mean

Like I knew this and this are true

But I never put them together

You know what I mean?

OK – are you ready?

Here's my realization

Jesus didn't have email

Texting

Facebook messenger

Heck, Jesus never talked on a **phone**

Jesus didn't have Facebook

Instagram

TicTok

Jesus didn't have Netflix

Or YouTube

Or Apple TV

I mean, He didn't know anything about Ted Lasso or the Yellowstone Ranch

Jesus didn't have 24 hour news

He didn't watch Fox News

Or CNN

He didn't pick sides – He didn't watch either one

Now I know some of you are asking yourself

“Hey wait a minute – were those invented back...”

Stay with me – stay with me

It's just that Jesus wasn't focused on what was happening in Washington DC

There wasn't a Washington when Jesus walked the earth

What does that mean?

Jesus' focus was right here

How often is our focus right here?

I want to challenge us to do something together

I want to challenge us to do a fast

But this is not going to be about food

I remember a few years ago

We did a rice & bean weekend

We chose to limit ourselves

To eating only rice & beans

From Friday after work

Till Monday morning

As a discipline

But also as a reminder of what people around the world face
everyday

It was horrible!

What was most memorable to me

Looking back

Was the stark difference it was

From what I normally do

It caused me to realize

What I take for granted

When it comes to food

I want to challenge us

To have another experience

That shocks the system

And reveals to us

What we take for granted

So next weekend

No pressure or obligation

This is voluntary

Next weekend

I want to challenge you

From when you get off work or school on Friday

Till Monday morning

To fast from screens

To go screen free

Use your phone if you need

But no social media

No scrolling

No television

Screen free

Now note – I made sure for everyone

That it wasn't superbowl weekend

I mean there's commitment

And then there's crazy

Here's why I want us to do this

Here's why I'm choosing to do this

I am confident that I am mindlessly in front of a screen

Far more than I realize

And a weekend without one

Will give me additional time to pray

Additional time to read

Additional time with my family

And a massive look in the mirror

About how I normally spend my time

Listen – Jesus was screen free

And it gave Him a perspective

That many of us have lost completely

In the circles we already live in

I'm not asking you to do anything new

In the circles we already live in

Are people who Jesus died for

Who don't know Him

They may know about Him

But they don't know Him

And one day

They will stand before Him

And He will say to them

Away from me, I never knew you {Show Matthew 7:22-23a - Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord... Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me!''}

And I need us to Love Intentionally

I need us to Be a Light

The reality is

Jesus said, "You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven." – Matthew 5:14-16

We're it

There's not a back up light coming

We're the light

So if the world is darker than you like...

Next time you go into a dark room

I want you to consider what goes through your mind

Next time you go into a dark room

Why don't you curse at the darkness?

Why don't you complain about the shadows?

Or the difficult time you have seeing things?

Why don't you focus on the darkness?

Because you instinctively just turn on the light

And when you turn on the light

The darkness kind of takes care of itself

I mean, how silly is it that the American Church

Sits in little circles

Complaining to each other about the darkness?

I mean, what's happening in Heaven

When men and women

Stand before God

A long procession of people

Wide is the road, Jesus said {Show Matthew 7:13b - For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.}

And one after another

He tells them they have to leave

Not because He doesn't love them

Not because He didn't pay the penalty for their sin

Not because He didn't shed His blood to buy their freedom

But because they didn't know Him

Because they had never accepted His offer

Of forgiveness and freedom and relationship

What's happening in Heaven

When men and women

Stand before God

A long procession of people

While the church

Sits in little circles

Complaining to each other about the darkness?

I think sometimes we've made Jesus too tame

Sometimes we've made Jesus too monotone

We read His words

And because its Jesus

They're famous

2000 years later

How many saying do people know from Jesus?

They may think it's Ben Franklin or Abe Lincoln

But no, it was Jesus

But that makes them commonplace

That makes them trite and dull and meaningless

So we read passages like this one:

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven.

But Jesus said them with the passion of a man

Who would die for them

Jesus said them with the passion of a man

Who would witness the long procession of men & women in Heaven

That He would tell to leave

I think if Jesus were teaching this today

In English

To us

He would say

You're the light of the freakin' world

Shine

Get out of your little huddles

Stop complaining in your little circles

And shine bright

Love intentionally the people I died for

Who live beside you

And work beside you

And watch soccer & baseball beside you

Stop being out there

Certainly stop being right here

And be here

Because they're here

And I love them