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Message Three:

Living To Make A Difference (2)

Matthew 5:14-16

In the last message of our series on Revolutionary Living we talked about the importance of God's people Living To Make A Difference. I said it last week and I'll say it again, this world needs to see *real* Christians who are absolutely sold out to Christ. Christians whose passion and priority in life is to live for God and serve Him. They need to see someone who has something that has made an eternal difference in their life. I'm talking about a difference so radical that one's life has been completely altered for time and eternity by God's saving grace.

People who fit that description are the kind of people Christ had in mind when He said, "*Ye are the salt of the earth . . .*" As salt they *penetrate* their sphere of influence and change the way it is. As salt they *preserve*. That is, they live in a way that *halts* the pollution and doesn't *help* it. They live in such a way that they *arrest* corruption and don't *add* to it. These people understand that a Christian will never make a difference until there's a difference. They understand that the difference makes the difference.

Sadly, for the most part, what the world sees in those who call themselves "Christians" is no difference whatsoever.

When teenagers, who are supposedly saved, sleep around and get pregnant and do drugs and drink alcohol at the same rate as non-Christian teens, where's the difference?

When marriages, that are supposed to be Christian, have the same divorce rate as non-Christians, where's the difference?

When business people who profess to be born again believers cheat, lie, and steal to the same degree as non-believers, where's the difference?

When the language of the average church member is indistinguishable from that of the rest of society, where's the difference?

I'll tell you where the difference is. It's gone, and so is our hope of reaching a lost and dying world. God help us to be salt . . . and God help us to be light.

Matthew 5:14-16

Light is another metaphor, used by the Lord in His Sermon on the Mount, to emphasize the importance of our Christian witness and testimony.

In these verses we see . . .

I. A REALITY THAT IS INESCAPABLE

“*Ye ARE the light of the world . . .*” When Jesus made that statement He wasn’t listing our options or making recommendations or calling for volunteers. He was stating a fact. God’s people *are* the light of the world. As a matter of fact, we are the *only* light this sin-darkened world has.

A. Becoming Light

1. The Apostle Paul teaches us that we were all in darkness at one point. He informs us of this truth in Ephesians 5:8 where we read, “*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord . . .*”

2. In Ephesians 4:17-18 Paul describes those who are still in the dark. Paul writes, “*This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,*

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:”

3. We were born into spiritual darkness. We were born lost. We were born alienated from the life of God which is eternal life.

4. If you have not yet trusted Christ as your personal Saviour, you are still in the dark, but you don’t have to remain in the dark. You can be brought from the darkness into the light. Listen to this, “*Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:*

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”

5. How is one brought from darkness to light?

6. Jesus tells us in John 12:35-36, 45, “*Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.*

While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light.

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.”

7. We become light when we place our faith in Christ as our Lord and Saviour.

B. Being Light

1. The Validity of our light

a. I read Ephesians 5:8 a moment ago, but there’s more to it. What I read was, “*For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord . . .*” But Paul went on to say, “. . . *walk as children of light.*”

b. Solomon makes an interesting contrast in Proverbs 4 between the path of the just and the way of the wicked. He writes, “*But the path of the just is as the shining light . . . The way of the wicked is as darkness . . .*”

c. John pulls no punches when he states in 1 John 1:5-6, “*This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:”

d. For John to have written that means that it is possible for someone

to make a claim with their mouth that is not validated by their life. In this case, they say that they have “seen the light” if you will — that they are in fellowship with God — yet they are walking in darkness or sin.

- e. Look what John said of such a person. He said they are lying.
- f. The truth of the matter is, if someone is in Christ they are a new creature, old things are passed and all things have become new.
- g. No one can come to faith in Christ and remain the same any more than they can come in contact with a 220-volt wire and remain the same.
- h. You might profess to being a child of the light, but if your life doesn’t back it up, you’re not telling the truth. And the Bible says that those who live in darkness here, will be cast into “outer darkness” where “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

2. The Visibility of our light

- a. Our text tells us that light that can’t be seen is of no value.
- b. A Christian who does not give testimony to his or her faith in Christ is not a lot of good to a world that is lost in darkness.
- c. We’ll address this more in a moment.

3. The Vitality of our light

- a. Note that Jesus did not say to His listeners, “Ye are the lights of the world.” He said “Ye” (plural) are “the light” (singular).
- b. God’s people, collectively, are to be the light of the world. But let’s narrow it down to Fellowship Baptist Church and Liberal, Kansas.
- c. *We* are to be *the* light to our community.
- d. Let me show you what happens when someone fails to let their light shine.

(1) Let’s say one of us can’t control our tongue and he or she is either cussing or lying or gossiping or criticizing or whatever. Look what happens (turn off a random row of lights). It’s not too bad when just one of us fails to shine for that reason, but what if two or three fail? (Turn off two more rows of lights)

(2) Let’s say one us, for whatever reason, doesn’t ever share our faith in Christ with others. Look what happens. (Turn off another row of lights.) And look what happens when two or three of us fail to tell others about Christ (turn off two more rows).

(3) Let’s say someone from FBC is known to frequent the bars in our community? What does that do to our light collectively? Let me show you. (Turn out two more rows).

- e. When *one* of us fails to shine as brightly as we should, it diminishes the effectiveness of *all* of us.
- f. *Your* sin affects *my* ability to effectively reach our community, just as my sin would adversely affect your efforts.
- g. The brighter our lives shine for Christ *individually*, the brighter we will shine *collectively*.

II. A REQUIREMENT THAT IS IMPERATIVE

Jesus said, in no uncertain terms in verse 16, “Let your light so shine before men . . .”

A. Our Purpose

Our purpose is to be . . .

1. Guiding light

a. We read in Philippians 2:15-16, *“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;*

Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”

b. Listen to what the Lord said about Paul and Barnabas and their ministry. *“For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth”* (Acts 13:47).

c. In John 1 we read this about John the Baptist, *“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.*

The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe.

He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”

d. Granted, we are not *the* Light. *The* Light is Jesus. But we are a light that points the way to *the* Light.

e. Where is your life leading your family and friends — your coworkers and teammates? It’s either leading them *to* Jesus or *away* from Him.

2. Reproving light

a. John 3:19-21, *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprovèd.

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”

b. Ephesians 5:13, *“But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.”*

c. Light reveals the truth and exposes the true character of things. That explains why the unsaved person, for the most part, stays clear of the church and the Bible. God’s light reveals his true character, and the exposure is not very complimentary.

d. When a Christian chooses to walk in light and avoids things that are outright sinful or may be questionable, they expose the dark things of sin for what they really are. They also expose those who participate in such things for what they are.

e. A preacher by the name of Clovis Chappell once said of Christians who live the way a Christian ought to live, *“You may like them or dislike them, you may love them or hate them, you may fight *with* them or fight *against* them, but you cannot ignore them.”*

B. Christ's Plan

1. Christ's plan is for our lives to attract others to Him.
2. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works . . ."
3. Here's the plan. We get saved. Our life changes. We begin to live for the Lord. Other see it and they too get saved. Which brings us to our thought which is . . .

III. A RESULT THAT IS ILLUSTRIOUS

- A. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."
- B. When a Christian let's his or her light shine, God is not only *identified* through their life, but He is also *glorified*.

CLOSING: When Benjamin Franklin wanted to interest the people of Philadelphia in street lights, he didn't call a town meeting or try to persuade the people by talking about it. He simply acted upon what he considered a good idea. He hung a lantern on a long bracket in front of his house. He kept the glass clean and carefully trimmed and lit the wick every evening as it began to get dark.

As the story goes, the lamp helped the people see where they were going and made them feel more secure at night. It wasn't long and others began placing lights in front of their houses. Soon, Philadelphia recognized the need for street lights.

I challenge you to be that one light that makes a difference.

(Have Beth sing "Go Light Your World" for the invitation)

In the story about Benjamin Franklin it said he kept the lantern glass clean and the wick trimmed. It could be that the reason your light isn't shining as brightly as it should is because your life's not as clean as it should be. Perhaps there are some things that need to be trimmed away so your light can shine more effectively.

