

Date: 09-29-2019

Series: The Sermon on the Mount

KEYS TO IMPACTING THE WORLD AROUND YOU (Matthew 5:11-16)

Matthew 5:11-16-----¹¹ "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹² Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ¹³ "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Probably none of you know **who Edward Kimball** is. In the middle of the 1800's, he was a Sunday school teacher at a church in Boston, MA. One Sunday, a 17-year-old teenager became part of his class, but this teenager was totally out of place in the big city since he grew up in the country.

Kimball handed him a Bible and asked him to turn to the Gospel of John, but he couldn't find it. As the class began to take turns reading John's gospel, the country boy struggled as he tried to read and was laughed at.

Thankfully, Kimball was patient with him and, over time, began to sense a great future for him. After working with him for a few months, Kimball visited the store where this young man was working and was taken to a back room where he found him stacking boxes. That day, Kimball led him to Christ.

Now, you may not have recognized the name, Edward Kimball, but you will definitely recognize the name of the 17-year-old teenager he brought to Christ—**D. L. Moody**—one of the greatest evangelists in the modern era. To this day, a large church and Bible college in downtown Chicago bear his name and continue to raise up Christian missionaries, pastors, and teachers!

D. L. Moody impacted the world with the gospel of Christ because a faithful S.S. teacher impacted D. L. Moody. Because Edward Kimball let his light shine, he impacted not only D. L. Moody but millions of others!

In our text this morning, our Lord continues His Sermon on the Mount. And what He tells you and I is that there are three very important principles that we must understand if **we** are to have the impact He has created each one of us to have. And that is what I would like to speak to you about this morning for just a few minutes.

Title: Keys to Impacting the World Around You

(Prayer)

An entrepreneur and writer who lives in Silicon Valley, Gil Laroya, penned the following words about something he observed each day as he drove to his office in California. He wrote:

As I drove into work this morning, I looked around at the lanes of traffic, and I saw faces of people making a living — going to work, doing tasks and meeting deadlines, and then getting a paycheck for their efforts. These people could be assemblers, engineers, CEOs or venture capitalists, yet in their cars on the way to a job they all looked the same. But what differentiates any of these workers from each other is whether or not they make an impact — on their jobs, on their personal lives or even on themselves. Do they live, or do they just exist?

That is a great question! Laroya closes his article with the same question:

Each day when you get ready to go to work, consider this question—“Do I live to exist, or do I exist to live?” The basic premise being whether you go through your day just waiting for it to end, or do you use the day as an opportunity to make things better.

In my mind, I would rather go to bed knowing I made an impact in life, rather than going to sleep just being happy I survived another day.

Last Sunday, at the beginning of our series on the Sermon on the Mount, we looked at eight qualities that Jesus is looking for in His followers. Those qualities are found in Matthew 5:3-10. They are qualities of Christians who want to do more than simply “exist.” They are qualities of Christians who want to “live”—who want to make an impact for Christ both now and in eternity. They are the character qualities of those who will be “**great** in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:19).

Now in today’s text—vv. 11-16—what we see is the way that those who possess those character qualities should use them to impact the world around them. Jesus wants us as His followers to **impact** the lives of others. He does **NOT** want us to simply “exist” — to just survive—He wants us to be change-agents! So how do we do that? Three ways.

We can impact the lives of those around us...

1. **When we respond with joy and not retaliation when persecuted (5:11-12)**

Vv. 11 & 12 are connected to v. 10:

Matthew 5:10-12-----"Blessed are those who are persecuted **for righteousness' sake**, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **Blessed are** you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely **for My sake**. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

V. 10 speaks of being persecuted because you choose to do right and not evil—being “persecuted **for righteousness’ sake.**” But in v. 11, Jesus speaks of being persecuted “**for My sake.**”

If you are not ashamed to tell others that you are a follower of Christ and that He is the only way to God, at some point, Jesus says you will be:

- “reviled”—insulted/suffer verbal abuse
- “persecuted”—harassed
- have “all kinds of evil” spoken against you “falsely”

When you are persecuted like this **and you take it calmly**, you will impact those who see it.

And why can we respond like this?

First, because we are “blessed”—very fortunate—to have the opportunity to suffer for our Lord.

Second, because Jesus promises: “GREAT is your reward in heaven.”

And **third**, it impacts people. They will see this and say, “*Why is that person like this? I wouldn’t respond that way! What do they have that I don’t have?*”

In Acts 7, when Stephen was being stoned to death for speaking the truth about Christ and Israel’s rejection of him, just before he died, he cried out: “*Lord, don’t hold this sin against them!*” and then he died. Do you know who was standing there and heard that? Saul of Tarsus (who later became the Apostle Paul). Who knows what impact Stephen’s death had on Saul?

So first...

We can impact the lives of those around us...

When we respond to persecution with joy and not retaliation

The second reason we can impact the lives of others is in v. 13:

“You are the salt of the earth...”

We can impact the lives of those around us...

2. **When we make Christianity “taste good” to those who aren’t believers (5:13)**

Salt makes food taste good. Dallas Seminary professor Howard Hendricks told a story one time about how he and his wife had people over for dinner and as they began to eat, he said his wife's face turned white and she blurted out: "Don't eat the mashed potatoes! I forgot the salt!"

What is the "salt" Jesus is referring to here? It is **the character qualities we studied** last week in vv. 3-10. People should be attracted to Christianity by the kind of people we are. We should make Christianity "taste good" to those who have never experienced it. Salt is important for good flavor.

But there is another way salt is important (especially in Jesus' day when there were no refrigerators). **Salt is also a preservative.** People encased things like meat in salt to keep it from going bad.

And as disciples of Christ, another way we impact the world around us is by slowing down the growing corruption of human society. And this is why we can't be passive about politics and the world around us. We must not be afraid to say what God says—e.g.,...

- that life begins at conception and abortion is the murder of an innocent child
- that marriage should be between one man and one woman
- that gay and lesbian behavior is a sin, not "a natural part of our diversity as a species" (Andrea Ganna).
- that if you were a male when you were born, then you are a male for the rest of your life (and the same for females)

If you take a stand for truth claims such as these, this will be highly offensive to many people, but it will impact others for good. We need to be willing to take it on the chin for Christ. We should not be content to just exist, we need to LIVE!!

Jesus told His disciples to be very careful about **this. Notice, v. 13:**

"You are the salt of the earth; **but if the salt loses its flavor**, how shall it be seasoned? It is then **good for nothing** but to be **thrown out** and **trampled underfoot by men**."

When we lose our "flavor" as Christians (when we lose the character qualities we looked at last week in vv. 3-10), we will lose our impact on the world and become spiritually useless (= good for nothing).

And when the world sees Christians like that (who claim to love God but don't live like it), they tend to reject them (= throw them out) and despise them (= trample them underfoot).

In the movie, *It's a Wonderful Life*, George Bailey (the lead character played by Jimmy Stewart) is very depressed. Nothing ever seems to go right for him and he has gotten to the place where he wishes that he had never been born. So what happens is this: his guardian angel named Clarence is sent to him by God to show him what the world around him would look like if he had he never been born.

- His sweet mother is a mean-hearted widow running a dilapidated boarding house.
- His happy-go-lucky Uncle Billy is in an insane asylum.
- His beautiful wife Mary is an unmarried librarian and his four children do not exist.
- His war-hero brother Harry drowns as a child because George was not there to save him.
- And his town, Bedford Falls, is now called Pottersville. The once family-friendly village is instead a dark city of drunkenness, strip joints, and promiscuity. Even Bailey Park, a subdivision of beautiful new homes he helped build for economically-strapped families, is now a creepy cemetery called the "Potter's Field."

Upon seeing all of this George is completely confused and asks the angel: **"Why am I seeing all these strange things?"**

The angel responds, **"Don't you understand? It's because you were never born. You've been given a great gift, George—a chance to see what the world would be like without you."**

Without George Bailey's presence to stave off the evil influence of Mr. Potter, the city of Bedford Falls and its people fell into decay.

First, we saw that we can impact the lives of those around us...

When we respond to persecution with joy and not retaliation

Second...

When we make Christianity "taste good" to those who aren't believers.

And finally, we can impact the lives of those around us...

3. **When we share God's truth with others backed up with good works (5:14-16)**

Matthew 5:14 ----- "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

As salt, we are to make Christianity "taste good." As light, we are to help people see it clearly—to understand it. When we set this light "on a hill"—we hold it high so everyone can see it. We need to make it as visible as possible. Notice v. 15:

Matthew 5:15 ----- Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, **but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.**

We should not conceal the truth of God's Word or the gospel of salvation in any way (= put it under a basket) but should make it as visible as we possibly can (= put in on a lampstand so it gives light to all).

How do we do this? By doing good deeds that flow out of our good character seen in vv. 3-10:

Matthew 5:16 ----- Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works** and glorify your Father in heaven.

If we're all "talk" and no "walk" (if we never do good works to back up what we are proclaiming), it will result in people rejecting the gospel.

Jesus said it is when people see "good works" that God is glorified:

Matthew 5:16 ----- Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works **and glorify your Father in heaven.**

A woman who was the daughter of missionaries to **the Democratic Republic of Congo** told Minnesota Pastor Leith Anderson the following amazing story.

As a little girl, she participated in a daylong rally to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the coming of missionaries to that part of Africa. At the close of a long day of speeches and music, **an old, old man stood before the** crowd and insisted on speaking. He was close to death, and said that if he didn't speak, information that he alone possessed would go with him to the grave.

The old man shared that when the missionaries first arrived, his people viewed them as weird and their message as suspicious. The tribal leaders decided to put the missionaries to the test. They began slowly poisoning them to death. Over a period of months and years, missionary children died one by one. Then, the old man said, **"It was as we watched how they died that [moved us to believe in Christ.]**

Those who died painful, strange deaths never knew why they were dying or what the impact of their lives and deaths would be. But through it all, they didn't leave. They stayed because their faith was in Christ.

(Closing comments on impacting the world)