

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

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Merciful and Heavenly Father, we come into your presence again with joy and thanksgiving. We humble ourselves before you in all of your majesty and your glory. Father, rid us of our self-centeredness, and create within us an other-centeredness, that we might be salt and light, that which you call us to be in this dark, dark age. Father, we pray that you'd cleanse us of all unrighteousness. Remove all those things that are offensive to you and your holiness, that we might be worthy vessels to sit at your feet this morning, that your Holy Spirit will guide us into all truth, and may it be so for Jesus' sake; let it be. Amen.

We started a couple of weeks ago, beginning study on the Sermon on the Mount, recorded for us in Matthew 5, 6 and 7. As we saw last week, and the week before, Jesus was moved with compassion to present this sermon. Probably the greatest sermon ever preached. He was moved by compassion and began to deal with people who were hurting, but he was also dealing with his own staff. This essentially, chronologically, was his very first staff meeting. Jesus was calling his 12 disciples to come together.

We see in Matthew 7, at the end of the book, the end of the Sermon on the Mount, we saw that the masses were with him. The masses heard this, but he was really teaching the core group, the disciples. There's a great principle for us about developing ministry in the local church. You develop ministry by ministering to the core group, not the masses. That doesn't mean that we don't appeal to the masses. I'm not saying that. All I'm saying is you'll see the model that Jesus gives us here in this Sermon on the Mount, he calls the 12 disciples to him, but other people overheard it. Contrast that to trying to water down the Gospel to appeal to the masses, and what happens is the core group suffers.

If you really want to develop an in-depth ministry, then we have to go into depth and understand that there's a difference between growth and expansion. Growth would be taking people deeper into the faith, and that's what Jesus is doing here with his 12 disciples. He's teaching them, but other people hear it. That's really what we need to do in the church. We need to teach the great details of the doctrines of grace in the pulpit and let the other people hear it. That's where the Holy Spirit will do his job of convicting people of their sin, convincing them of their sin, converting them from their sin, comforting them and their new way of life and counseling them in their journey toward heaven. So that's what we need to do. The proclamation of truth and the Holy Spirit's job description is to lead us into all truth. There are several principles that we can see about the whole arrangement of how Jesus was teaching the Sermon on the Mount. He emphasized it to the disciples, but the masses heard it.

Last week, we looked at the very first couple of phrases of this. We talked about the idea of blessed. Every one of these eight principles of Scripture is introduced by the word "blessed." We looked at the word "blessed" last week, really means happy in spite of circumstances. There's a difference between joy and happiness. Joy is the state of the person; happiness is the expression of the person. Joy is the state of being. It's something that overrides circumstances and situational ethics. It's really something that is the depth of the soul of the person.

What he says is, "Blessed is that person who really is happy in spite of the circumstances in which they surround themselves." As he had a conversation later on in his ministry with Nicodemus, Nicodemus said, "What do I need to do to be saved? What do I do?" He said, "Nicodemus, you've got all your theology right, but you've made one eternal, tremendous error, and that is you've externalized religion. You've made it external, when really, religion is something that is internal. It's something of the heart and not of the expression of the life." That doesn't mean that we don't do good works. We've talked about that before. Jesus' point was, "Nicodemus, unless something supernatural happens in your life,

where God implants a life that has its origin in heaven, and not on this earth, you can't even see the kingdom of God." Jesus introducing the kingdom of God concept here, which is the theme of the Sermon on the Mount, basically says, "Happy are those persons whose state of being is that they are filled with joy and they're happy in spite of the circumstances." Joy is the state of the person and happiness is the expression of the person.

Let me take you to a verse that will help us understand this. Go to the last chapter of the book of Hebrews, Hebrews 13. Where is it that somebody finds peace? You see, what Jesus is teaching us is that he's basically teaching us that peace is found in a person, not in situations. Peace is found in a person, not in circumstances.

The writer of Hebrews, in Hebrews 13, beginning at verse 20, writes this wonderful benediction to the whole book of Hebrews, and I'll be reading from the English Standard Version of the Bible, "<sup>20</sup>Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, <sup>21</sup>equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."

You notice that? "Now may the God of peace"? You see, peace is really found in a person. That's what Jesus is saying when he uses this word makarios, the Greek word for blessed. He's basically saying that when you have a relationship, that it takes on these character qualities, and he begins to introduce to his disciples. You notice what he doesn't do. He doesn't say, "Alright team, here we are. Here's our strategic plan for the next three years." He basically says, "Men, this is what you're going to become. Follow me and this is what you'll become." The greatest leadership principle we can ever describe is the words "follow me." There's no leadership without followership. You see, somebody has to follow in order for there to be a leader. The real question for those of us, leadership is essentially influencing the behavior of people. Every time you're in a relationship with somebody, you're in a leadership position. The question is how do I talk? How do I lead? Why would that person choose to follow me? Because there's no leadership without followership.

Jesus is basically saying here, "I'm going to make you into this kind of a person so that when you follow me, you'll take on the three characteristics of a disciple," which he later taught them was this, "If you want to come after me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me." Three characteristics of a disciple. People ask me, "How do you define a disciple of Christ?" I let him define that for us, which he does in this statement, "If you want to come after me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow me."

He's describing three character qualities, which he describes in the Beatitudes, and that would be this. The first one is self-denial, then self-sacrifice and then self-submission. Self-denial, self-sacrifice and self-submission. Those are the qualities of a disciple. When somebody says, "Will you disciple me?" what you're really going to do is what? You're going to teach the person how to deny himself. You're going to teach the person how to sacrifice himself. You're going to teach the person how to be a follower, and to submit to an authority above themselves. You see, discipleship is not about being self-centered; it's about being other-centered. It's about being other-centered.

Jesus is teaching us in the Beatitudes there are certain character qualities that are paramount for you to enter the kingdom of God, and when you enter the kingdom of God, these characteristics, known as the Beatitudes, will take over the flavor of your life, and this is how you live as a kingdom citizen. In summary, the Sermon on the Mount is how does one enter into the kingdom of God and how does one live as a citizen of the kingdom of God. He's really describing the citizens of the kingdom and the conduct of the citizens of the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, 6 and 7.

He starts off and says, “One of the characteristics of a person who is in the kingdom of God is that they’re going to be happy in spite of circumstances.” That’s radically different than anything that our culture will teach us, because we talk about situational ethics and situation determines everything. Jesus is saying there’s something that’s going to override that, and that is that blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. You see, there’s something far more supernatural going on around us than we believe. Jesus used that wonderful word “makarios,” which means happy in spite of circumstances. That’s a radical picture that the world doesn’t understand. Only the kingdom citizens can understand that.

Jesus introduces the conduct of the kingdom by saying here is the character of a kingdom citizen. The character of the kingdom citizen is found in these Beatitudes. Just listen to these and then we’ll begin working our way through them.

**Sig:** *When you say kingdom citizen, [UNCLEAR], I hear other people talk that way about the Sermon on the Mount, and if you weren’t a kingdom citizen, you may not be able to understand the Sermon on the Mount. Does that mean that a person who hasn’t been born again, and then they’ll get the Sermon on the Mount?*

Uh...yes. You’re welcome. {LAUGHTER} That’s a great question, Sig. Look at this logically. Let’s say that I was trying to teach the Sermon on the Mount to a group of unregenerate souls, people who do not know Christ. Here’s what I would say, “Pursue holiness and righteousness. Blessed are the pure in heart.” They’re going to say, “What in the world are you talking about? I don’t have any idea what you’re talking about.” Well they wouldn’t, because an unregenerate person has no idea what it means to be pure in heart, yet that’s what Jesus is saying, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall be satisfied.” The person who’s unregenerate is going to say, “Look, my satisfaction comes from my achievements.” That’s going to be very, very discouraging to a non-believer to say, “You’ve got to have a pure heart, and they’re saying, “I can’t do that.” So you see, only the ones who really understand, who’ve been made regenerate, are going to understand, “What’s it mean to have a pure heart? What’s it mean to pursue righteousness? What does it mean to be fulfilled by a relationship with the Savior?” You see, an unregenerate soul is going to have no idea what you’re talking about. That could very, very discouraging to a non-believer. It can be very, very discouraging.

You have to have a sense of sense of having God removed your heart of stone, giving you a heart of spiritual sensitivity and a heart of flesh to understand this. Now just because you’re a kingdom citizen doesn’t mean you’re going to understand this in its fullest context, but we’re always going to be growing. My position would be this—it’s only the believer who’s going to understand the significance of this because the non-believer has no idea. It would be very, very frustrating for say, “You mean you’re telling me that I’ve got to have a pure heart? I think I’ve got one,” and they just define it how they do that by the system of the world. There has to be an understanding of what it means to have saving faith to understand the content of the Beatitudes, because that’s who it’s for.

**Audience Member:** *Bruce, what’s worse, they might give it a try.*

There you go. That’s right.

**Audience Member:** *And exhaust themselves in some kind of sacrificing [UNCLEAR]...*

That’s a good point. They would say, “Well just look what I’m doing. This defines my pure heart. I mean, I give to Good Will Industries,” or “I’m a volunteer in my local charity,” and they would give you all these things. That’s a great illustration. They would say, “I can do that.” What we’re going to say is,

“You can’t do that.” You can’t do that. You have to be poor in spirit. That’s going to be contrary to everything that the unregenerate would say.

***Audience Member:** I think it’s interesting, too, that when Jesus said, “Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me,” he had not yet been on the cross, and then he turned around and did what he...*

That’s right. Incidentally, that second character quality, self-sacrifice, in the context of the biblical data, that means sacrificing unto death. It doesn’t mean sacrifice your job or your car or your house or whatever. I mean, it could go to the fullest extent of, because the context of those verses, when they talked about “take up your cross daily,” the cross meant death. That, potentially could, for us, being a disciple, could mean that I might need to give my life for the cause of Christ. Are we willing to do that?

I trust that the Lord in his mercy might be pleased not to ever ask us to do that, but if he did ask you to do that, would we be willing? Are you really willing to deny yourself? Are you willing to sacrifice yourself? And are you willing to follow Christ?

We know of situations in the world where that has happened. The Lord has been pleased to call people to do that. But that’s what that really means. It means far more than just making superficial sacrifices of your lifestyle. It means, “Will you follow me to the point of death should I ask you to do that for the kingdom?” I can’t answer that for you. That’s only something you can answer for yourself before the Lord. But that’s what that means. Self-sacrifice means am I willing to give my life for the cause of the Gospel should that occur.

***Coop:** To your point about [UNCLEAR] who commit to [UNCLEAR] who are literally [UNCLEAR] their life, brother/sister, but more importantly, let’s look at the upside, I know in my case, I’m always teaching Ty to be ready to take somebody down, but to be ready be merciful (5:7), but you have to be prepared to break out peace, to make peace, by holding the power of self-sacrifice or by withholding the power of the opposition’s sacrifice to their god, but that merciful [UNCLEAR] is what they have a hard time grasping. There’s so much technology and destructive power, and he’s in the mix down there telling [UNCLEAR] spiritual life is what this is about, be prepared, I’ll patch you up, but also [UNCLEAR]...*

Let me read these Beatitudes for you, because here are, take a look at your notes on handout number 2. We get down to item B, “The character and witness of the citizens of the kingdom.” The character of the citizens of the kingdom are found in these verses in Matthew 5:3-16. Let me read these for us. Here are the characteristics of a kingdom citizen. If you’re an unbeliever and have not been granted saving faith by the grace of God, this is really not going to make much sense to you.

“<sup>3</sup>Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” We’re going to go through each other of these separately. “<sup>4</sup>Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Who wants to be sorrowful? Who wants to mourn? You’re telling me that I’ve got to mourn? That I’ve got to have a broken heart? You see, they’re going to try to create all sorts of understanding of this. It’s only the kingdom citizens who are going to understand this, through the grace of God. How about, “<sup>5</sup>Blessed are the meek,”? You’re telling me I need to be a doormat? Is that what that means? “<sup>6</sup>For they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup>Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. <sup>7</sup>Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. <sup>8</sup>Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. <sup>9</sup>Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. <sup>10</sup>Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup>Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. <sup>13</sup>You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no

longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. <sup>14</sup>You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup>In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

That's a description, brothers, of the characteristics of a kingdom citizen. You'll also notice the consequences of a kingdom citizen. Go down to verses 13-16. Notice the verb tenses in verses 13, 14 and 16. What's the verb tense there? Present tense. It says you are salt and you are light. What Jesus does at the very point of his sermon, he says, "Here's the end result. When you take on these eight character qualities of a kingdom citizen, the result will be this in your life, present tense reality.

Notice what he does not say. He does not say you should become this, you might become this, you ought to become this, or you can become this. He's saying that when you take on these characteristics of a kingdom citizen, the consequence in your life is going to be supernatural, and the result will be in present tense reality, you are going to be two things to a lost world. You are going to come across and be perceived as being salt, and you're going to be coming across and being perceived as being light. Those are the two things that are going to be the consequences of your taking on the characteristics of a kingdom citizen, and that is by sovereign design. This is not something, brothers, that you and I have a choice in doing. It is the natural consequence of having a regenerated soul, of having your heart changed from stone to life. You will be this. You are this. And you are that constantly. It's present tense. Every time you read this, it's always going to be present tense verbs. You read it tomorrow, it's going to be you are. You read it next week, it's going to be you are. The question is are you? Do you understand the consequences of this?

Let's take a look at what Jesus is saying about that. He's saying the kingdom citizens are going to be two things in this dark, depraved world. You are going to be salt, and you are going to be light. Salt is a preservative. You can take a diseased organ of the body, place it in a saline solution, a solution of salt water, and it slows down corruption of that diseased organ. That's what you do. You and I, by our mere presence, wherever we are, are supernaturally slowing down the corruption of this world. Do you realize that? Take that to work. That's the best thing I do at PNC is show up. {LAUGHTER} It's not my leadership management skills. It's the mere physical presence that I show up every day, and the consequence of that is that corporation is not being as filthy as it could be if I were not there. Now that doesn't say anything about me. It says everything about what it means to be a kingdom citizen.

*Tom: Salt is also used for flavoring. Isn't PNC better off because you are there...*

I would hope so.

*Audience Member: ...adding flavor to the workplace?*

Yeah. The other thing salt does is it adds flavor to it. It makes something palatable. You see, that's the impact we have. We lose sight of thinking that our ministry is a result of our position. Guys, our ministry is a function of our person, not our position. It's you are salt. When you show up at your work site, at your corporation, that corporation is less likely to be as depraved as it could be if you were not there, because you have slowed down corruption.

I recently read that in the last 25 years, there's a study every year that the BBC out of London, and a committee with the United Nations does some analysis every year, and they come up with the number one problem in the world. In the last 20-some years, it's always been poverty and food, and hunger. Except this year. This year they say the number one issue, worldwide, affecting all cultures, is corruption. Corruption is the disease that's hurting humanity worldwide, not hunger and poverty. Why is

it that we have hunger and poverty? It's because of corruption. They're saying the issue that needs to be dealt with in society now, yes food and hunger, but if you want to deal with food and hunger, you've got to deal with the bigger issue. The root cause of all of that is corruption. What is that salt does? Salt slows down corruption. That's what we do as kingdom citizens. When you and I go to work, brothers, wherever you are, your mere presence is having a supernatural impact upon the world because your mere physical presence there is slowing down corruption of that event.

*Audience Member: Bruce, it also creates a thirst and [UNCLEAR].*

It does.

*Audience Member: What was that?*

It creates a thirst. The other thing about salt is it makes something palatable, something desirable. You and I give some, hopefully, an aroma of the beautifying of the gospel. There's a wonderful verse in the Scripture. It says, "Make the Gospel beautiful." Do you do that? You see, that's part of our life being salt.

We just need to understand there's always something, a bigger picture going on than just what we think on a daily basis. We come back and say, "Well the Lord didn't use me today because I didn't do this or I didn't do that." Well the Lord used you because you were there. You are there. You see, you just never know what's happening. You just never know.

You've got to understand the bigger picture, brothers. Jesus is saying this, "That's the person who's blessed. That's the person who's happy in spite of circumstances." Because they understand this—the consequence of these characteristics of a kingdom citizen, you're going to slow down corruption. Now that does not give us pride, guys. That should not give us the big head. It ought to humble us, to realize that you're going to use me when I go into K-Mart, that K-Mart, the corruption of K-Mart is slowed down because I'm there, and the way I'm going to respond and the way I'm going to react, and the salt that I'm going to be, that I might make the Gospel more beautiful by the way that I respond to a situation. You see, that's the person who's blessed, because they're not controlled by circumstances.

*Audience Member: When you say corruption, corruption is fed by greed.*

Well, corruption is fed by a lot of things—pride of life, lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh. It's all those things.

*Audience Member: Bad teaching.*

Sure. Bad teaching brings about corruption.

*Dale: One of the thoughts I have, when you talk about salt, is the salt in oceans of the world. There the salt would kill you if you drank the water. Is that a...?*

That's a good thought. {LAUGHTER}

*Dale: I don't mind being under the water in a vessel. I don't mind being over the water in a vessel. But I don't want to be in it. When I first went swimming in the ocean, I came out and I felt faint. I don't why. I suppose because I got some salt in my...*

Either that or your shorts were on too tight. {LAUGHTER} I don't know.

*Dale: I think that the salt in this case, if there's an excess of it, it means that I've been too pushy in what I'm trying to do.*

It could be. Yes. We have to realize that this is really about God; it's not about us. It's not about us. That's the important thing. You and I don't go to work and say, "Oh my great joy today is I'm going to slow down corruption." No, you go with a great sense of humility, a great sense of dependency, a great sense of self-submission. I'm going to give you an illustration of the kingdom in just a moment. But that's one of the things that we do, is that we just slow down corruption and we make the Gospel of Christ palatable. We give them a taste that somebody...it whets their appetite for it because of who we are. Remember our ministry is not because of our position, it's because our person.

*Audience Member: So how do we do that in the world, in the marketplace?*

I'll give you an illustration in a moment. I have to do something visible so Don can see it here.  
{LAUGHTER}

The second consequence of being a kingdom citizen he says is light. Now light is reflective. Light is not the source itself. What light does is it exposes other things. He says, "You are the light of the world." In other words, we're going to expose certain things. What is it that light does? Light exposes sin.

Let's go to John 3. After his conversation with Nicodemus, which we just reviewed briefly, let's pick it up at John 3:16, "<sup>16</sup>For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."

The word "believe" there is a very, very aggressive word in the Greek language. Unfortunately, in our English vernacular, we've made the word believe become very passive. The word believe is very, very active. It does not mean to give mental assent to a group of facts. It literally means this—to depend upon, adhere to, rely upon or trust upon. Now that's very, very aggressive, and so this is a very active verb. You must believe. That means you've got to depend upon Christ, you adhere to Christ, you rely upon Christ and you trust in Christ. Those are very, very active verbs that describe the concept of believe. It does not mean you sit back on your haunches and just contemplate a lot of facts and go through some Eastern Oriental mantra and repeat something. It doesn't mean that at all. It's not passive at all. It's very, very aggressive. Notice the number of times this aggressive word "believe" is used.

John 3:19, "<sup>19</sup>And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. <sup>20</sup>For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God."

Now notice. Have you ever walked along the side of a road on a hiking trip or something and you pick up a rock. What happens to the worms and the maggots when they're exposed to light? They say, "Oh goody. Thank you." {LAUGHTER}

Do you see what I mean? When they are exposed to light, they run. They hide. Because their evil deeds have been exposed. That's what Jesus is saying. The second that you see that we are in this world as a consequence of being a kingdom citizen and having the characteristics of a kingdom citizen is we're going to expose people's sin. That is not necessarily a comfortable thing to do, but it's a consequence

that you and I don't control. You see, the consequence is, by your being salt and light, one of the things that we will do is not only slow down corruption, give a taste for the Gospel of Christ, but in the meantime, you might be exposing people's sin. That's why sometimes we need to realize it's only natural for the world to hate us.

Why do we think the world should love us? We have this warped idea that we're the best thing on the earth. Idealistically, you're the most offensive thing in the world because your mere life in Christ is going to expose their sin. They're not going to like that. Why do you think that persecution of the church has been going on for centuries? It's because sin has been exposed. Jesus says that's the natural consequence of your being a kingdom citizen. You're going to expose people's sin. They're not going to like that. That's why they run, they hide. It's just like the worms and the maggots when you lift up the rock, or the piece of rotten wood, they scatter because they've been exposed.

We've got to realize, brothers, that the world may not necessarily think that we're the greatest thing since night baseball. But that's the consequence of being a kingdom citizen. That's why it's so important you understand these three character qualities of a disciple—self-denial, self-sacrifice and self-submission. Notice the key word in all of those is the word “self.” You've got to deny yourself, pick up your cross and submit to me. Those are the attributes of a disciple, because you understand this...and notice the very last phrase of this verse in John 3 that I read, “so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.” In other words, it's about God; it's not about you and me. It's about God. Our ministry, guys, is not what we do, it's who we are where we are.

**Brian:** It's kind of funny, I was sitting here thinking why so many pastors and people say, “This isn't for our time. This wasn't written to us. We don't have to follow this anymore.” [UNCLEAR] by taking it to John 3 as in talking through the light allows us to be off the hook as so-called believers. If we don't follow this, then we're not going to expose that light, we can be happy/touchy/feely and feel good about ourselves and not be in the battle and not influence the world.

That's a good point. Let me give you an illustration. If you take Matthew 5 and combine that with Luke 6, which is the Lukan version of the Beatitudes, you're going to basically see this summary. Love those who hate you, jump for joy when you're persecuted, bless those that curse you, pray for those who wound you, and forgive those who hurt you. You put those together, that's the summary of the Beatitudes from Matthew 5 and Luke 6. Basically it's this very quick summary. Jump for joy when you're persecuted. There's a contrast—joy versus persecution. Love those who hate you. Contrast—love versus hate. Contrast—bless those who curse you. Pray for those who wound you. And forgive those who hurt you.

Notice those five words. Just take those five words. On this hand, let's look at these words. You've got persecution, hatred, cursing, wounding and hurting. What does that describe? That describes the corruption of this world's system. That's describes the world's system. If you live in the world's system, you're going to experience these things—persecution, hatred, cursing, wounding and hurting. That's what the world offers us.

Now Jesus is saying, “Blessed is the person who responds differently to those things of the world because you're salt and light.” He contrasts those things of the kingdom with this. The first one is this—jump for joy when you're persecuted. Secondly, love the person who hates you. Thirdly, bless the person who curses you. Bless those who curse you. And then pray for those who wound you. And forgive those who hurt you. Now look at those words. You've got the words joy, love, blessing, prayer (which is committed concern) and forgiveness. What does that describe? That describes the kingdom of God. That's what Jesus is saying when he says, “Blessed are you when you take on these characteristics of a kingdom citizen because the characteristics of your life is going to be this—joy, love, blessing,



prayer and forgiveness.” That’s what’s going to characterize your life. When you take on those characteristics as understanding you enter into the kingdom of God, you’re going to be salt and you’re going to be light.

The real issue is how do we do that? The issue is this—the next time you’re persecuted, what do you do? You gripe. No. You what? Jump for joy. Say, “Thank you Lord. I have no idea what this means, but I’m just going to trust that you’re in it; that this is your sovereign work. It’s your providence you’ll work in my life. I don’t know what this is about, but I’m not going to gripe, complain or blame anyone. I’m just going to say thank you Lord. I’m going to jump for joy to the best of human ability, trusting God to make up the difference in this situation. I’m going to trust you.” You see, our response to what the world offers it the way that we are salt and light.

Take the next one. Somebody hates you. Love is what? Love is committed concern. Love is doing the right thing. It doesn’t mean you’re not going to be hurt. But what you do is we do not give them what they stimulate within us; we give them something that is different. We give them the characteristics of the kingdom. When somebody hates you, you say, “Lord, give me the grace to love this person. I don’t know how to do that. It’s all about you; it’s not about me. Would you give me the grace as a kingdom citizen to do something that is the right thing? What is the right response for me to have to this person who just demonstrated their hate for me?” That’s a kingdom citizen. You’re salt, you’re light.

How about when you’re cussed out? When somebody cusses you out, what do you do?

*Audience Member: Show mercy.*

Give them the finger? No, of course not. You bless them. You don’t give them what they stimulate within you.

When somebody wounds you, what do you do? You pray for them. When somebody hurts you, what do you do? You forgive them. You see, the way that we live out being salt and light on a daily basis is that we do not response to what the world stimulates within us, and that is going to be this—persecution, hatred, cursing, wounding and hurting. That’s what the world’s going to offer you today.

As a kingdom citizen, we don’t respond to that. We don’t give back to them what they stimulate within us because of God’s grace, being a kingdom citizen, we understand this—happy in spite of circumstances; I can now respond through the grace of God, I can now respond with joy, which is the state of my being. It’s the state of my being. I can respond with doing the right thing, the loving thing. Do the right thing as defined by the Scripture. And I can bless that person who just cussed me out. I can pray for that person who just wounded my spirit. And I can forgive the person who just hurt me.

You see, that’s how you do it. That’s how you be it. Jesus says, “This is who you are. You are the salt of the earth. You’re going to slow down corruption.” How is it that we slow down corruption? We do not give back to people what they stimulate within us. We give them something of the kingdom of God that’s in us.

You know what you’re going to do when you do that? You’re going to expose their sin. That may not be comfortable. What is the role of the Holy Spirit? To guide people into all truth. It may be that in your response, it might make the Gospel of Christ palatable. It might give a taste for the Gospel. You just never know that. But it’s our response to the normal situations of life that Jesus says, “Happy is that person who doesn’t respond and give back to what the world stimulates within you.” He gives you something of the kingdom of God. That’s the happy person. That’s the person who is makarios, they’re blessed, they’re happy in spite of circumstances.

You see, brothers, an unregenerate person wouldn't understand what we just said. "You mean to tell me that I'm supposed to love the person who just hated me? He's been doing this for months, for years, and I'm supposed to love him? That's ridiculous. What about my pride? How about me?" You see, Jesus says you've got to understand this, guys. You've got to enter the kingdom before you can live like one.

When you enter the kingdom, you're going to live like this because your life is going to change because you're taking on these characteristics of a kingdom citizen, and that's going to change your conduct. You see, character precedes conduct, because who we are determines what we do. The first thing that he describes is the character of a kingdom citizen. That's what's going to affect your conduct because character precedes our conduct because who we are determines what we do. He says, "Team, disciples, this is who you're going to become in your character as a kingdom citizen. And then you're going to hear next about our conduct, that you're character has got to precede your conduct." That's why he says "Blessed are you" for those eight Beatitudes. We're salt and we're light.

The way that we live out our saltiness and our light, exposing things, is the way that you and I respond to what the world offers us. The world's going to offer you these five things, guys. Face it. This is the world in which we live. Persecution, hatred, cursing, wounding and hurting. That's what the world is going to give you. But by God's grace, if you're a kingdom citizen, you and I and now have, because of God's wonderful gracious power, the ability not to give them back what they deserve. We give them what God gave us. That's why ministry is giving away to somebody else what God has given you. You see, our greatest opportunities of ministry may be when you're persecuted. It may be when you're hated. It may be when you're cursed out. It may be when you're wounded. It may be when you're hurt. Because at that time, you and I can give them something they don't stimulate within us. We give them something of another system. We give them something of the kingdom of God.

Now if that kingdom is not within you, you can't give that away. That's why it's so important to understand what Jesus was teaching his disciples. He's saying, "In order to become a kingdom citizen, you've got to take on these characteristics. Your character as a kingdom citizen will determine your conduct as a kingdom citizen. Character precedes conduct, because who we are determines what we do.

***Audience Member:** It helps, me anyway, to remain humble to remember that I was once not a member of the kingdom...*

Amen.

***Audience Member:** ...and responded just like that. I was a maggot under a rock. Right? The same way the maggot runs, now by his grace I'm not.*

Absolutely. Amen. That's what gives us the base of humility.

***Audience Member:** The issue here, too, is not justice because it's an unjust world, so we need to not be offended, give the right response.*

Absolutely. That's right. It's not about justice. It's about holiness. It's about obedience. It's about being salt. It's about being light.

Let me just show you one other verse, and we'll conclude with this. Go to Isaiah 1:18, "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool." You see, that's what we were prior to what we are now. We were, in that, "your sins are like scarlet."

Now, biblically, the word “scarlet” means double dipped. Crimson is double dipped. In other words, to get that deep red texture in a piece of wool, you had to dip it twice. You dipped it first in the red color, and then you pulled it out and let dry. Then you dipped a second time because you wanted it to be deeper in its color, in its way, of the depth of the color. That expression there, “as crimson, your sins are like crimson,” means you’re double dipped. Do you realize, brothers, that you and I are double-dipped sinners? We’re sinful by birth and sinful by choice. We’re double-dipped. Sinful by birth. I was born sinful, and I chose to continue to be sinful by the choices I made. Isaiah is saying this, “Your sins are double-dipped. You’re just like this piece of wool that’s been dipped into red color to make it a depth of the sin is so deep.” But...by God’s grace, you can be made white as snow.

Brothers, never, ever forget the fact that you and I are double-dipped sinners. We’re sinful by birth and sinful but choice. But when Jesus comes into your life and he grants you saving faith through the person and work of Christ, and you become a kingdom citizen, your sins that are like scarlet and crimson, are now white as snow. That’s the basis of our humility. It’s realizing what I was and now who God says I am. Now he says this, “You were a double-dipped sinner. You’re still a sinner, but you’re now saved by grace.” You’re still a sinner.

Several years ago, I was asked by a rather predominant TV show to go on and give my testimony on a Christian TV show. They said, “Would you fill out your testimony and write it down?” All I said was this, “I’m a double-dipped sinner, by birth and by choice, saved by God’s grace,” and their response was, “Your testimony is not significant enough. {LAUGHTER} It won’t attract anybody.” I said, “You’re right. I won’t attract anybody to anything. But I do know this—I’m a double-dipped sinner. I’ve just been saved by grace,” and their response was, “It’s not glamorous enough.” What more could you want, brother? Than to realize this—that my sin has been forgiven and I am a kingdom citizen. That means today that I am. All my being is I’m going to be salt, and I’m going to be light today. Not because of anything I’ve done. It’s because my character now precedes my conduct. Because who I am determines what I do. You are salt. You are light.

Let’s pray. {Music} And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!!