

We Are The Lights of The World

REVIEW: This is the final week in our series in which we have been taking a long look at salvation. Next Sunday we begin a new series on the book of Ephesians. We started our current series way back in March. Told you it would be a LONG look. My hope is that it has helped you better understand your own salvation, and more importantly, the God whose salvation it is. Remember, "Salvation belongs to our God."

Allow me to give a brief recap of the series - and I'll try not to re-preach the whole thing.

- I. We started by looking at God and many of His qualities
 - A. The fact that God is perfect and good
 - B. He is self-sufficient and does not need us
 - C. He is completely unique and we cannot fully understand Him because of that
- II. We then looked at man
 - A. Our sinfulness
 - B. Our rebellion against God
 - C. How serious it is that we exchanged the worship of the Creator for His creation
 - D. How hell really is a just punishment, and because it is, hell screams of the glory of God
- III. Then we looked at God's solution for us - Jesus Christ
- IV. We looked at our responses to Jesus
 - A. A hardened heart or a melting heart
 - B. The soil of our hearts and the fruit of repentance
- V. Then we walked through many of the specific doctrines of salvation
 - A. Predestination, justification, adoption, and sanctification
 - B. We also looked at how sanctification works itself out with our fellow man
- VI. All of this has been pointing to God's redemption of us or reconciliation
 - A. The idea of reconciliation is to fix, to bring back to alignment, or to bring it back the way it was meant to be
 1. We chose to break from our Creator - chase down paths that are not leading us into the fullness of life that God designed and desires for us
 - B. We try to fix our problem by buying into a whole bunch of lies
 1. "I need a better version of me"
 - a) If you are the problem, how can a better version of you fix the problem?
 2. "I need someone to complete me."
 - a) A friend, a spouse, my child

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- b) People can complement you, but they cannot complete you and when you think that way, you put too much pressure on a relationship, asking someone to do something they were never designed for
- 3. Or we buy the lie that we just need more of the world to satisfy
 - a) The problem is when we think stuff will satisfy, we forget that it will wind up in the church rummage sale one day
 - b) When we think worldly pleasures will fill the void in our heart, we somehow forget the fact that they are temporary, AND almost always bring guilt and shame
- 4. Some try the religious route to fix the problem
 - a) Try to be good enough for God - not possible
 - b) Try to put their energies into serving their fellow man so they can get to heaven - doesn't work that way
- C. The reason none of these things work is because we are the problem!
 - 1. Our heart is wicked and we are in need of a transplant
 - 2. And the transplant can only be provided by God Himself, through Jesus Christ
 - 3. ALL of God's wrath toward OUR sin, when we trust in Christ, was absorbed by Christ on the cross on our behalf
 - a) If you know Christ as your Savior, you will NEVER face the wrath of God
 - 4. But further than that (all our sins absorbed in Christ) Christ gave us His righteousness
 - a) We are not just "sin-free"
 - b) We are fully, and perfectly righteous because of Christ
 - c) But please understand that we live out that righteousness imperfectly
 - (1) There is no such thing as a perfect Christian (other than positionally)
 - (2) So people accuse the church - "It's full of hypocrites!"
 - (a) Absolutely it is!
 - (b) And you would be right at home
- D. The gospel works through our lives and even touches our relationships with others
- E. But the big scandal of the gospel is we don't have to earn our way to salvation or a new heart, God gives us the new heart so we can love and serve Him
 - 1. Ezekiel 36:26-27 (look up)

INTRO: Today we finish by looking at Matthew 5. It is a passage that helps us better understand how we can "glorify our Father in heaven."

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- I. You are the light of the world
 - A. This is addressed to followers of Christ - so this is not just for anyone
 1. As such, if you are here today and new to church or faith, this may come off as arrogant in some ways
 2. My hope is that I can help keep it balanced
 - B. Regardless of what you believe (Christian, Muslim, Buddhist) everyone has something they believe is the light of the world
 1. Christ said that His followers would be the light of the world
 - a) Some might think, “Really? I know some of these Christians, and they seem more responsible for travesty than triumph”
 - b) While I can’t get into that now, in some cases you might be right, but any TRUE follower of Christ will be seeking to aid his fellow man by the principles taught in God’s Word
 2. Everyone has something they think is the light of the world
 - a) For some its education
 - b) Others opportunity
 - c) Others its the government
 - d) Not to be rude, but these have all turned out to be far worse than the gospel
 - e) So here we go - you may not like this next part, but that’s okay
 3. America is a capitalist country
 - a) Capitalism does nothing to transform the heart
 - b) In fact, it creates space for a culture of greed, oppression and injustice to grow
 - (1) Why? Because We created a system where wealth can be gained - more often at the expense of the poor, and the heart of man takes over and instead of helping our fellow man, injustice sets in
 - (2) I am an America hater
 - (a) Love our country
 - (b) Love the freedoms we enjoy
 - (3) All I am saying is simple - capitalism does not change hearts or end oppression or injustice - only the gospel of Christ can transform hearts
 4. Whatever you name outside the gospel, it will never transform hearts - all it will do is create some form of structure in which oppression and injustice can thrive
 - a) And because “the heart is desperately wicked” oppression and injustice will be what we get

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- b) You may have well educated people, people with lots of opportunities, etc. but most people without Christ will use that for their own gain
- c) Technology will be our savior and help us to have more time with our families, and increase relationships
 - (1) Anyone ever text someone in your own household?
 - (2) Really?
- 5. It is a problem of man that we think we know what we need, when we apply that, things get worse
 - a) And then we think we can solve that problem, and maybe we do, but then a new unexpected problem comes up
 - b) Think about the materials we use to use in manufacturing goods
 - (1) Asbestos, lead paint, radon
 - (2) Do you know where the term “mad as a hatter” came from?
 - (a) When they produced hats in the 18th and 19th century they used mercury
 - (b) It would cause a form of dementia in the makers of the hats
 - (c) Humanity: “Here, this will help in the production of hats! Oh, by the way you will go crazy and it might kill you.”
 - (d) This is the extent of man’s wisdom
- 6. “You are the light of the world”
 - a) Christ is talking about US
 - b) Because of what Christ has done in us, the change of the heart, we are the light of the world - to show them there is a better way
- C. Do you want to know how this is possible that we are the light of the world? Look at Matthew 5:2

II. Blessed...

- A. Blessed are the poor in spirit
 - 1. Blessed means more than “happy” - its a spiritual joy
 - 2. The ones that know they got nothing before God
 - a) In contrast to the Pharisees who think they got it all figured out
 - b) They don’t need God because their righteousness is so strong
 - 3. They know that everything they have is a gift from God - they have nothing apart from God, including their ability to believe
 - 4. So this may sound harsh, but keep in mind that I love you all so I have to say the tough things too
 - a) If you are so awesome that you don’t need a Savior, you are NOT saved
 - b) If there is not a little bit of “God help me” in you, than you haven’t come to the end of yourself and face to face with THE Savior

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- B. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted
1. This is not mourning because you are sad that a negative event took place in your life
 2. It's about being broken over sin
 - a) Seeing how you have fallen short before God
 - b) Mourning over that sin and the ways in which you exchanged worshipping God for God's stuff
 3. But the best part is that those who do so, "Will be comforted!"
 - a) Think about the woman caught in adultery
 - (1) We know the story (recap)
 - (2) Jesus tells her, "Has no one condemned you? Neither do I. Go and sin no more."
 - b) This should help us see that conviction is a gift from God
 - (1) Conviction gets a bad rap but it is a good thing!
 - (2) When we are convicted before God of our sin, THAT is when we are comforted
 - c) So if you walk out of church and you feel convicted of sin, PRAISE GOD!
 - (1) If you don't feel convicted of sin its time to worry
 - (2) If God is never pointing out where you are falling short, you may not be a Christian
 4. We should mourn over our sin
 - a) And that gives God the opportunity to remind us that He paid for that too
 - b) He lifts us up, and tells us that He has not abandoned us just because we messed up - we are still His!
- C. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth
1. One myth regarding meekness is that it is equal to being passive
 2. But the more we trust in the promises of God the more bold we become for Christ - hardly a passive position
 3. So if you are a business professional of some sort - aim high
 - a) Go after it
 - b) Make it to the top - but do it in a godly way
 - (1) Don't neglect your family to get there - b/c that is not godly
 - (2) Make sure you are walking in Christ, and work like crazy - don't apologize for it
 - c) Being righteous does not equal being passive
 4. Meekness enters the picture when we keep life in perspective that God gave us all that we have
 - a) We are not self-made men and women

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- b) We recognize that Christ is our Savior, and He provided for us, and allowed us to achieve what we have achieved
- D. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled
 - 1. The Bible teaches us that we are to be content in life
 - a) It's okay to seek after your dreams, but be content with what God has given you
 - b) If you have a car, a house, a family, be content with every and all of what God has given you
 - 2. The one area the Bible shows us that we should always desire more of is Christ Himself - His righteousness manifesting itself in our lives in ever increasing ways
 - a) That is the holy discontent we have talked about in the past
 - b) That drive that says I want more of Christ
 - c) And if Christ is truly infinite, there is always more to get
 - (1) Just when you think you have had your fill, there is still more
 - (2) I feel this way many times
 - (a) I know much of Christ
 - (b) But I always want more of Him - to experience Him, to love Him, to experience His love for me
 - 3. This is all over the Bible, but let me give you just one place - Psalm 42 - "As the deer pants for the water so my soul longs for You, oh God!"
 - 4. Blessed are those that hunger for righteousness
- E. Now before I move on to the others in the list, let me point out two things
 - 1. First, these first four things are not things that the world gravitates toward
 - a) They fight against everything in our culture
 - 2. Second, if these things are not present in your life to some level, you probably don't have Christ in your life
 - a) I know that can be harsh to hear, but wouldn't you rather hear it from me, examine yourself, and change, than hear it from God - "Depart from Me, I never knew you."
- F. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy
 - 1. When the first four are at work in us, being about humility, bringing about dependance on God, what happens is a growing empathy for others
 - 2. What God's mercy does in us when we receive the kingdom of heaven, and comfort, and inherit the earth, is it gives us compassion for those that do not know any better
 - a) The world does not hunger and thirst for righteousness

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- b) That's us!
- 3. But because of how Christ has acted in us, we show mercy to others
 - a) We NEVER get high and mighty over our position with God
 - b) We NEVER think of ourselves as better than others
 - c) We have compassion, mercy and grace for them
- G. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God
 - 1. Obviously this is not a cholesterol test God is talking about, He means that at the core of who we are, we seek purity
 - 2. Now, be honest, has anyone ever been scared of how dark your thoughts can sometimes be? I have.
 - a) Standing and talking with someone thinking to myself, "I sure wish I could punch this guy dead in the face right now because he is annoying me!"
 - b) How crazy is it that we can slip into these dark moments in our thoughts
 - (1) The Bible says that we are to take every thought captive for Christ
 - (2) Confess those dark moments and those thoughts to Him and rely on His strength
 - (3) Ask for pure motives, ask to be delivered from angry thoughts or lustful thoughts, or gossipy thoughts
 - 3. Seek being a person that is pure in heart and will not stand for even the thought in your mind to remain there - but you turn that over to Christ
- H. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God
 - 1. Peacemakers don't let disunity occur - they stop it before it gets started
 - a) When someone comes to talk about others they are the people who stop you and say, "I'm not listening to this. If you have a problem with brother so and so, go talk with him."
 - b) A peacemaker will risk conflict for the sake of peace
 - c) They might be the ones that point out the good in someone when everyone else is ripping on them
 - (1) "Yeah, but did you realize that they love Jesus and are so patient with two of the shut-ins of our church. They help them get their meals ready three times a week."
 - 2. That is a peacemaker - drops the awkward bomb in the middle of a conversation to stop disunity in its tracks
- I. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven
 - 1. Please read that carefully with me again - why are they persecuted?
 - a) Because of righteousness
 - b) Not because they did something stupid

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- (1) If get stopped by the police for doing 95 on the highway, that is not persecution!
- (2) Actually that's called justice!
2. Where this does come into play is when you are at work and are expected to do something illegal or immoral to "get the job done"
 - a) Lie to a client
 - b) Fix the numbers on the books
 - c) If you lose your job because you refuse to operate in that grey or even black area, you need to hear this..."GOOD FOR YOU!"
 - (1) Praise God even!
 - (2) You are being persecuted for righteousness, and the kingdom of heaven is yours!
 - d) But what about his family, how will he provide?
 - (1) Answer - I'm not sure, but I trust God will provide
 - (2) Even more than that, that man, that woman can lay down each night with a clear conscience - something many cannot say
- J. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me
 1. I promise you this will begin to happen more and more as Christianity becomes the enemy in this country - we are already seeing it
 2. In some ways this is a good thing because it is weeding out the true followers of Christ from those whose Christianity was just because it was what you were supposed to do
 - a) But that puts us in a place we have never really faced before
 - b) Christianity is already being painted by huge brushstrokes about who we are
 3. An example: the issue of same-sex marriage is huge right now
 - a) While the government and even some churches pass legislation regarding it, the language being used about Christians is coming out loud and clear
 - (1) We are accused of being bigots
 - (2) We are intolerant
 - (3) We may as well be the KKK
 - b) Now follow me closely on this issue - those accusations BETTER be false
 - (1) While our position may never be understood by those outside of God's kingdom, we had better be people of compassion, love, patience, mercy
 - (2) You follow me - never should we be bigoted, or like the KKK

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- (3) People should be confused because we say we don't believe in gay marriage but we have gay friends
 - (a) And we treat the people with respect and honor
 - (b) Even open our home, care for them, love on them
- K. This whole message is about how we are lights to the world because of the love that God has already shown us
 - 1. It does not stop at those we disagree with
 - 2. We do not isolate ourselves from the world - we are not going to catch someone else's sin by being around them
 - a) Do we need to be wise
 - b) Of course
 - c) But we are Christ's light in the world
 - d) Light pierces dark places
 - 3. So I urge you, I beg you, to let your light shine in that darkness
 - a) Trust God in how you shine
 - b) Trust God that He will draw people to you
 - c) But most of all, let it shine and see what amazing things God does for His glory!