

MISSIONS IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT Matthew 5:1-16

From a mountain pulpit Jesus delivered the world's most famous sermon. This Sermon on the Mount is in essence the divine constitution for the government of King Jesus upon the earth during His coming Kingdom. It has been called "The Masters Manifesto" and, even though its complete fulfillment is futuristic, it has a message for us today.

The application of the principles in the sermon for Christians today has been addressed by many notable authors, among them are: George W. Truett who said, "It is not an evangelistic sermon. It does not present the plan of salvation. It does not tell us how to be saved. But it does describe some of the characteristics of those who are saved and lets them know what kind of life they should live."

Martin Lloyd-Jones said, "I maintain that if only every Christian in the church today were living the Sermon on the Mount, the great revival for which we are praying and longing would already have started."

I believe that the Sermon on the Mount contains concepts that should be applied to the Christian's life and mission upon the earth. Within Matthew chapter 5 there are three different areas of the believer's responsibility outlined. They are:

Our mission is to imitate the deity;
Our mission is to impede decay;
Our mission is to illuminate darkness.

I. OUR MISSION IS TO IMITATE DEITY.

We hear much today about what we as believers are to be busy doing. However the responsibility that Jesus emphasizes is what His subjects, His followers, are to be in their persons. Consider:

A. Our Mandate. V. 48 "You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect." The first responsibility that I want to emphasize is at the end of the sermon and it is contained in the above statement in the word "perfect." The word "perfect" is a difficult word; but Jesus used it and we must not brush it aside. When Jesus said, "be perfect, just as your father in heaven is perfect", he was establishing a goal for us, for as long as we are in these bodies of flesh with sinful natures and in the sinful environment of this evil world, it is not possible for us to achieve ultimate perfection. If we did, we too would be deity.

However, Jesus expects us to aim for perfection. That is the mandate that He gives at the end of His mountaintop sermon. A low aim means a low mark. The higher the goal, the loftier the achievement. Therefore, as we set out on our life's mission our primary goal should be to "be holy and without blame before him" (Ephesians 1:4). And, lest we should wonder what such a life of holiness would be like, He gives us the perfect Model in the person of Jesus Christ.

B. Our Model.

As we read the Beatitudes, we are moved to ask the question, “Who has ever fully lived such a life as is described in these Beatitudes?” Of course, the answer is, Jesus Christ – the One who is teaching these precepts. He was what He taught that we should be.

There are nine character traits of the person who is called “blessed” which are reflections of Christ’s likeness. It is not possible to evidence these qualities in our lives apart from the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. He produces these virtues. The Holy Spirit produces in the child of God only that which is like Christ. Therefore, Paul urged the Ephesian Christians to “be imitators of God.” (Ephesians 5:1).

Contrary to the current philosophy that seems to prevail, our primary mission in this world is not to “do” for God but it is to “be” for God; it is not to be modeling our lives after the people around us but to be copying Christ in our lifestyle. To carry out our mission to imitate deity in our living up on the earth, God has given us the Model of perfection, the Lord Jesus Christ. Are we modeling Him? Are we:

- Humble in spirit like him?
- Mournful over the spiritual needs of others?
- Does meekness characterize us?
- Are we hungry and thirsty for righteousness?
- What about merciful?
- Are we pure in heart?
- Peacemakers?
- Persecuted because we are Christlike?

Ideals are like stars—the ancient sailors could never reach up and touch the stars, but by keeping their eyes upon them, they guided their ships safely. We must keep our eyes on the divine model, the Lord Jesus Christ, if we are going to imitate deity.

Illust. It is reported of a certain painter that he always painted with two canvases he for him – one above the other. On the upper canvas which was always white, the artist visualized what he intended to paint. He had a vision of what was to be as a result of his painting. On the lower canvas he reproduced in oils the scene that he visualized on the upper canvas.

The Lord Jesus is our “upper canvas” - our Model. Do others see our Model, the Lord Jesus Christ, reflected on the canvas of our lives? This is basic to missions, although we do not hear this truth emphasized very much. Perhaps that is one reason why mission endeavors in some cases is so weak.

C. Our Mission.

Our first mission upon the earth is to Model our Master—to imitate Deity. That is quite an awesome responsibility. He desires that before we attempt to declare verbally His message, that we model the message visibly before those whom we seek to lead to Christ. The verses in Matthew chapter 5 that are often referred to as the Beatitudes mean, “attitudes of being.” They are the qualities which marked the life of the Lord Jesus and He desires that they be reproduced in us.

The emphasis is upon what we are in actuality, not what we do in activity. Our greatest work for God and man is to “be” what God in Christ has made us to be. The influence of a holy life is the best advertisement of the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is what a person is, not what a person does, that counts the most. When we model our lives after the ultimate Model, Jesus Christ, His beautiful life will be seen in our lives. The old hymn “Let the Beauty of Jesus be Seen in Me” emphasizes this truth:

“Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me
All His wonderful passion and purity
Oh, Thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine
‘Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.”

Illust. A young Japanese girl had saved her money to go to Paris to see the Mona Lisa painting. But when she heard that the painting was on tour and would be coming to Tokyo, she went there to see it. Afterwards she went to see a plastic surgeon and asked him to make her face look like that of the Mona Lisa, intending to pay him with the money she had saved to go to Paris. The doctor said, “Young lady, that beauty is not something that can be put on from without, it must, from within.”

Likewise, the out-living of the in-living Christ will be a visible imitation of deity. Remember, “He that says he abides in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked” (1 John 2:6).

II. OUR MISSION IS TO IMPEDE DECAY. *“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”* (Matthew 5:13).

The word “corruption” means spoiled, filthy, rottenness, putrefaction, poisonous, infectious, unsound or decaying. Is used to describe the nature of sin, sinful thoughts, the sinful nature of man, sinners, the world system and people in general. Peter speaks of escaping “the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4).

Is within this setting of corruption that Jesus says that Christian’s are salt. Some of the disciples had been fishermen and they knew the value of salt in order to retard decay. It is interesting to notice that Jesus did not say, “you have the salt” nor did he say, “give them salt” but he said, “you are salt.” With Jesus emphasis on our being salt consider the place and the power of salt in society.

A. The Place Of Salt In Society. *“...you are the salt of the earth.”*

God wants his salt all over the earth. The Christian is not to be an isolationist. We are social beings and where ever we are we are to be the Savior’s salt among other human beings. In the workplace, the home, the classroom and on the street we are to be what Jesus said we are, salt. We are given that individual designation and responsibility by the Lord Jesus.

Not only are we salt individually but the Church of Jesus Christ collectively is a powerful resistance to corruption. A community of Christians can have a great impact upon society and flavor an entire city. However, some Christians act as though Jesus had said, “You are of the

sugar of the earth.” They sugar-coat everything. Others act as though He had said, “You are the pepper of the earth.” These are those who have an acidic tongue and with it condemn everyone and everything.

The Glidden Paint Company had an advertisement on a billboard along the highway that was a picture of the globe of the earth with a paint bucket turned upside down above the earth with paint spilling out all over the globe. The caption beneath the picture was, “We cover the earth.” Salty Saints should cover the earth for salt must come into contact with decay and corruption in order to be effective retardants of it.

B. The Power Of Salt In Society.

The power of salt is out of proportion to its size. If you have a baked potato before you, you do not need a heap of salt equal to the potato in size before the salt is effective. A sprinkle will do. A few genuine Christians can be powerful though small in number. Do you remember Abraham interceding with God to spare Sodom? The city would have been spared if only 10 righteous men could have been found.

It is not the quantity of salt but the quality of salt that is important. “If the salt loses its flavor” it is good for nothing. When salt is weakest, corruption and decay are strongest. When Christian influence wanes corruption flourishes.

Christians who are only “salty” when in church are not fulfilling their mission upon the earth. Many churches are salt boxes with a steeple on top. However, salting out in society, in many cases, is not being accomplished. A barrel of salt in the corner of a butcher shop will never retard spoilage. In order to impede decay it must come in contact with the meat. So it is with Christians who are strong in the church but weak in the community. These are those who are “hearers of the Word” but not “doers of the Word”.

III. OUR MISSION IS TO ILLUMINATE DARKNESS. *“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” (Matthew 5:14-16).*

Here is a specific and direct command by the Lord Jesus Christ: “let your light shine...” This is not the first command with regard to light. Reflect upon:

A. The Command He Spoke At Creation.

“Let there be light” (Genesis 1:3). The results? There was instant and continuous obedience – instantly the sun burst into brilliance and shot out its rays of radiance illuminating the universe in response to the Creator’s command.

B. The Command He Speaks To Christians.

There was another time when the Creator spoke and called for light. Darkness had invaded the world – the darkness of sin and Satan, of error and evil – moral and spiritual darkness. To borrow the words from Zephaniah: “A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Zephaniah 1:15).

Once again the Christ of the cosmos spoke saying, “you are the light of the world – let your light shine”. He spoke, not to inanimate spheres, but to his redeemed ones who have been delivered from the kingdom of darkness and transferred into His kingdom of light. Will they obey him as did the sun and stars in the heavens?

In many cases those who have been commissioned to be lights in the world have refused to shine. What a tragedy! What a mockery! The sun, moon and stars in their courses faithfully shine but some of His own children hide their lights. Can it be that they are ashamed to shine for Him who is shining for us as the Light of the World?

“Ashamed of Jesus: sooner far
Let evening blush to own a star;
He sheds the beams of light divine
O’er this benighted soul of mine.”

Conclusion

This world lies in the lap of the Prince of Darkness, the devil himself; we are little lights and the Great Light has said, “Let your light shine.” Out there in the darkness are souls groping for The Way, The Truth and The Life. Are you illuminating their darkness? There are millions without light and many who have been lighted seemed to be content to sit and sing:

“There is a call comes ringing o’er the restless wave
Send the Light, send the Light!
There are souls to rescue, there are souls to save
Send the Light, send the Light!”

I read about a blind man who was found sitting at the corner of a street with a lantern beside him. Someone asked him why he had the lantern knowing that he was blind. The blind man replied, “I have it so that no one will stumble over me.” We who have been commissioned to “let your light so shine that men may see...”, but hide our light, become stumbling blocks.

Illust. The mayor of Toronto, Canada launched an anti-crime program called “Light the Night” campaign. The idea was for residents and businesses to leave the lights burning overnight in order to discourage crime. They did and crime was reduced significantly. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus Christ, the Preacher, announced His “Light the Night” campaign. That is precisely our mission in this world.

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