

WHAT ARE YOU GOOD FOR?

Welcome to **Week 2 of The Word Made Flesh**. If you are joining us for the first time here at Vertical Church we are in part 6 of an 8 part journey we started back in February where we are reading through the Bible together as a church. If you would like to follow along with us you can find our F260 reading plan over at the NEXT area or if you are familiar with and more comfortable with the Bible App you can join us there by simply searching F260. We are currently getting ready to start Week 32 and if you haven't been following along with us now would be a great time to join in since we are just getting started with the NT portion of our reading plan. It is here in the NT portion of our journey where God reveals to the world His long awaited Messiah in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. As we make our way through the Gospels (and by the Gospels I am of course referring to the 4 Gospel accounts of **Matthew, Mark, Luke and John**) one of the most important messages, and probably one of the most well known that Jesus ever preached, was The Sermon on The Mount recorded for us in Matthew Ch. 5 through Ch. 7. This of course was not the first and only message that Jesus ever preached but if we are going to highlight one as we make our way through the story of Jesus this is the one to highlight.

It is in this sermon that Jesus not only confronts for the first time the real issue that plagues us all but He is going to provide the solution to the problem. As we have seen all throughout the OT, God's people were notorious for endless cycles of obedience, disobedience, repentance back to disobedience (rinse and repeat). As tends to happen when we are confronting disobedience over and over again, we tend to become so fixated on the law we are trying to obey and our ability to keep it that we lose sight of the real problem which is our sinful heart that keeps sabotaging our efforts.

By the time Jesus arrives on the scene in the NT the people of God are in a religious stranglehold and the gatekeepers are the religious leaders known as Pharisees. Even the Pharisees themselves are caught in this trap as their focus had solely become one's ability to keep the law without much attention to matters of the heart. But remember, if you go back and look at the words of the prophets, God's focus was never on the LAW but instead His focus was the matters of the HEART.

Isaiah 29:13 (NIV) The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their HEARTS are far from me.

Jeremiah 29:13 (NIV) You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your HEART.

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV) Above all else, guard your HEART, for everything you do flows from it.

Ezekiel 36:26 (NIV) I will give you a new HEART and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your HEART of stone and give you a HEART of flesh.

In order to confront this mindset Jesus is going to turn the attention of the people and His disciples towards what really matters when it comes to a life of faith. You see, legalistic strongholds that stem from a long list of do's and don'ts is not what God wants for our lives. And

the LAW, while it does provide important guard rails for how we should live, it does nothing to address the matters of our heart that impact those decisions. In fact, without consideration of our heart and its attitudes the LAW only becomes a huge distraction to what God really desires for us. So Jesus begins his sermon not with a list of do's and don'ts but with a list of heart attitudes that are to be reflected by a true child of God and He emphasizes the kind of impact the child of God should have on those around them. As we look at each of these attitudes I want you to ask yourself, "**Are these attitudes reflective of my heart and does my life have the kind of impact illustrated by Jesus here in His sermon?**" So as you are finding Matthew Ch. 5 I am going to **PRAY** for us and then we will get started.

Before we take a look at the list of HEART ATTITUDES the child of God should have I want us to first start with **the IMPACT the child of God should have on those around them** and then we will circle back and examine the Heart Attitudes that make that possible.

Matthew 5:13 (NIV) "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

When it comes to the impact of our life we should live in such a way that our presence changes the environment that we are placed in. In order to help illustrate this point Jesus compares us with two distinct elements that greatly impact the environments in which they have influence. **The first element He refers to is SALT**. Pure salt has two functions. The function of preserving something by keeping it from decay or the function of enhancing the flavor of something in an effort to make it more appealing. As followers of Jesus our lives should accomplish the same thing. The way we talk about Jesus to others and the way we live our lives should make God and His son Jesus more appealing to others. **Colossians 4:5-6 (NIV)** **5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders;** Those who are not believers. Those whose lives may be riddled with sin where they think they deserve judgment. We don't want to push them further away from God. Instead we want to draw them to Him. We don't want to destroy their lives, we want to preserve their lives. We don't want them to have a bitter taste in their mouth concerning God and His word. We want them to see that God tastes good and thus receive Him. **5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.** Every opportunity that God gives you to touch their lives with the Good News of Jesus Christ. Every opportunity you are given to show them love. Every opportunity to speak peace and life over dead situations. **6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.** That your words and your actions would be filled with grace and compassion so that those who hear them and experience them would actually find the experience appealing and rather than turn you off they would be compelled to listen and contemplate what you have to say.

However, if salt loses its saltiness what is it good for? Salt which becomes contaminated by other minerals becomes flat and will lose its preservative nature. Contaminated salt becomes good for nothing. Back in the days of Jesus salt that had lost its saltiness was used as a poison

to keep footpaths free of vegetation. When the follower of Jesus loses his or her saltiness we can become a poison rather than a blessing.

The second element Jesus refers to is LIGHT **Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV) 14** “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

Just like salt, light impacts whatever environment it is placed in. Light dispels darkness and cannot be hidden. It gives light to those who are in the darkness. It is meant to be displayed for others to benefit. Light also has the ability to purify and prevent bacteria from growing.

16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

By being LIGHT we light the way for people to not only know God but to also have the opportunity to worship Him. We in essence highlight God and give people the opportunity to discover Him for themselves. By being SALT and LIGHT Jesus is saying that the impact of our lives on this world should be that which preserves and enhances the lives of those around us. This means that the child of God should influence and encourage people towards God in whatever area of life we touch. We should bring JOY to joyless situations, Hope to hopeless environments, LOVE to those who feel unloved, GRACE to those who are beaten up and MERCY to those who feel condemned.

So how do we achieve this kind of impact? Jesus begins his sermon with **a List of ATTITUDES that are necessary if we want to be SALT and LIGHT.** Notice this is not a list of do's and don'ts or even commandments. These are heart attitudes that reflect the citizens of heaven, the true children who belong to God. And it is all about the condition of one's heart.

Matthew 5: 1-16 (NIV) Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, **2** and he began to teach them.

He said:

3 “Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

(Heart Attitude #1 - One who is humble and reliant on God) No place for self-reliance

4 Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they will be comforted.

(Heart Attitude #2 - One who is broken over sin and its impact on our lives) as opposed to the one who thinks nothing is wrong

5 Blessed are the **meek**, for they will inherit the earth.

(Heart Attitude #3 - One who expresses strength under control) This is not weakness. This strength under control and not given to impulses

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

(Heart Attitude #4 - One who pursues what is right and true) We have to take back our appetite from our flesh. Feed on the right things.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

(Heart Attitude #5 - One who gives people room not to be perfect) We realize that we are not perfect

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

(Heart Attitude #6 - One who pursues being set apart to God) God does the purifying. But we have to pursue it.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

(Heart Attitude #7 - One who seeks peace and reconciliation) Peace keepers avoid conflict and never resolve anything. Peacemaker confronts what needs to be confronted because the goal is resolution of the conflict. Jesus confronted our sin so that we could be reconciled to God. He didn't ignore it.

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

(Heart Attitude #8 - One who is not concerned with their own interests and desires)

Do you see yourself as a kingdom citizen that will affect and influence the world around you? Whether you are a student going into a classroom, going off to a university, entering an office building, or hanging with other stay at home moms. Do these ATTITUDES describe you? Are you SALT and are you LIGHT?

I want you to notice that you cannot achieve this by adhering to a list of Commands or LAWS. You cannot muster this up yourself and just try harder to achieve these things. **These attitudes are only possible if you will allow God's Holy Spirit to transform your heart.** This is only possible if you allow Jesus Himself (who by the way is the one who fulfills the laws requirements **17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.**) This is only possible if you allow Jesus Himself to change the desires of your heart by making a great exchange. You give Him your heart of sin and He gives you His heart of righteousness. In fact, next week we are going to talk about this more in depth as we look at what must happen in order for this great exchange to take place. But before we get there we must see that the Law or our ability to keep it cannot save us or even change us. Only Jesus can change us. Only He is equipped to change the attitudes of our heart. The Pharisees by

focusing on the Law were only able to address the outward side of man. But Jesus was and is able to create a new HEART!

Worship Team Comes Back Up

Invitation:

Have you TRUSTED in JESUS? Would you receive Him today?

Are you focused on trying to keep a list of Do's and Don'ts or are you looking to Jesus asking Him to change the attitudes of your heart? **You can't claim allegiance to the King if you are living contrary to His kingdom.**

Are you being SALT & LIGHT in your world? If not, why not? **We are not to be isolated from lost people. We must be separated from sin, but not isolated from sinners**