

Lesson 12

Loving My Neighbor by Sharing My Lord

Embracing the Need to Share Jesus

Introduction

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven, Matthew 5.13-16.

As we read through Scripture, we learn that God has divided our world into two distinct parts: those in light and those in darkness. As those who dwell in light, God has chosen us, His sons and daughters, to stand out and make an impact in our world. We reflect light because we have opened our heart to Jesus.

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me, Galatians 2.20.

Our goal is to help others see Jesus and His character. They should see happiness, warmth, compassion, care, concern, a forgiving attitude, and a godly, hope-filled life. We point the way to Jesus by the way we live. Your life will preach a far more effective lesson than a great number of sermons ever will.

The order of emphasis in this passage is important. Matthew 5.13 contains the first great result of being a Christian. *We are the salt of the earth.* That is, we allow the character of Jesus to fill our heart. **This passage tells us what we are.** We are God’s tools to save the world, having been given a distinct mission and purpose. Our spiritual mission is all about helping God bring about the salvation of others. Matthew 5.14 contains the second result of being a Christian. We are the *light of the world.* **This passage tells us what we do.**

When taken together, these verses teach that a positive influence will give us opportunities to teach others about the gospel. Notice 5.16. God is calling us to be light. *Let your light shine before others.* This is imperative.

Is your light shining?

We Choose to Move Toward the Light

When we choose to move toward the light, our relationship with Jesus will grow naturally. We learn how to adopt His principles and live in His way of life. This must be a daily pursuit. Paul urged Christians to remember that:

at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true) and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord, Ephesians 5.8-10.

There should never be a moment where Jesus is not welcome in our hearts. Are you willing to allow Jesus into every part of your life? We have been called to do so. The importance of this is seen where Paul commanded Christians to:

be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, Philippians 2.15.

Another important passage is found in Galatians 3.26-27. Here Paul mentioned how Christians have put on Christ. (This putting on happens in the act of baptism, Romans 6.3-6.) To *put on* something means to “array oneself.” In the original language, this referred to something that a person was inherently fixed to or intimately connected. He is the source of our light. Our immersion into Christ’s death through baptism and our resurrection to this new life allows us to be connected to Jesus. Christians have opened their hearts to Him and allow Him to shine through us.

There is a Message to be Shared

As we closely examine Matthew 5.14b-15 we find that light is a visible and revealing influence. God has called on us to make a visible impact on the world around us. **We cannot help those in the world if we are like the world.** We cannot benefit the world unless we show them there is a better way.

This is one of the greatest threats facing today’s church. Many Christians do not look that different from the world. This is seen in both attitudes and behavior. We struggle with immorality, dishonesty, our speech, the places we go, and the way we recreate. Living like the world will extinguish our light. We communicate far more than we realize. People are watching. We must realize they will either be drawn closer to the light or driven farther away from it by our influence.

Living in the light and sharing the message of Jesus is not impossible. We can withstand worldliness in such a way that it is not obnoxious. When a challenge comes, we can politely and firmly say “no.” Some will not understand, but in the long run, they will gain respect for those who stand on their convictions. When we lead lives that are characterized by self-discipline, self-control, and self-denial - we will stand out for good and reflect the person of Jesus.

This is our mission. It is our choice as to whether we will accept it or not. Which will you choose? Sometimes this is difficult. But remember, there is a great power inside you. The gospel is in your heart.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith, Romans 1.16-17.

There is great power in the lives of redeemed sinners. Think of the effectiveness of the changed lives of the Corinthians, 1 Corinthians 6.9-11.

This is all for a Distinct Purpose

Jesus said, *let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven,* Matthew 5.16b. We do not do service in the kingdom for the praise of others. We do

not do good deeds so people can tell us what great and marvelous people we are. Remember, lamps do not bring attention to themselves. They are simply placed where they will give the best illumination. God has not called us to be magnificent chandeliers that the world admires. Someone has rightly said, *we may be the little night-light in the hallway that keeps people from falling down in the darkest part of the night. Remember, God has called you to make a difference in the darkness.*

Conclusion:

Never forget your mission. You have been called to serve and shine. Share the message of Jesus and live for God's purposes.

For Thought and Reflection

1. Read Matthew 5.13. Who are we as Christians and what does this mean?
2. Read Matthew 5.14. What is our function as a Christian?
3. Is God's call in Matthew 5.14 optional?
4. How does Philippians 2.15 demonstrate the seriousness of our mission?
5. Why is worldliness such a great threat to the American church?
6. How is worldliness affecting you?
7. How can Romans 1.16 and 1 Corinthians 6.9-11 fill us with hope as we illuminate Christ?
8. For whose glory do we shine?