

Westgate Adult Class
7/11/21
Jesus Teaches About Discipleship

Summary and Goal

In this session, we will examine Jesus' teaching about the call to and nature of discipleship. We will read about His command to be both exemplary and set apart and yet simultaneously humble. In doing so, we will set a standard both of how to disciple and how to be disciples of Jesus Christ, the principal disciple-maker. The core of our Christian life is in being transformed disciples of Jesus by faith and in purposefully making disciples of others.

Session Outline

1. Jesus' disciples are to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16).
2. Jesus' disciples are to obey for God's glory, not their own (Matt. 6:1-4).
3. Jesus' disciples are to live purposefully (Matt. 7:19-24).

Background Passage: Matthew 5-7

Session in a Sentence

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught what it means to live as one of His disciples.

Christ Connection

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His followers what it means to be His disciple—someone who has been transformed by faith in Jesus and who lives for Him. Just as Jesus came into the world to be light, we too are to live in the world as salt and light for Him.

Missional Application

Because we have been saved by Christ and have committed to follow Him, we live purposefully so that others see His glory, investing in eternal treasures rather than earthly ones.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is **setting the tone and expectations for all that is to come.**

He is signaling to His listeners that following Him isn't just something at which passive participants can excel—everyone is called to the highest of standards, but only a certain kind of obedience will matter.

Jesus is also signaling what things will be like when God's kingdom comes crashing in. These people had been anxiously awaiting the coming kingdom and now in the ministry of Jesus it is being manifested.

In Luke 4 Jesus quotes Isaiah 61 as His mission statement for his ministry.

In Isaiah 61:1-2 we read, **“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn”**

When you open up to Matthew 5 you will notice that Jesus is telling us what things will be like in the kingdom. Just as Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 61 there will be good news for the poor (blessings) and comfort for those that mourn.

In the sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) we get a glimpse into the heart and DNA of kingdom living. If one wants to know the heart of New Testament ethical teaching and the way things will be in Jesus's kingdom then look no further than these three chapters.

Point 1: Jesus' disciples are to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16).

READ Matthew 5:13-16

13 “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.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 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. 16 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.

The salt that Jesus referred to in this passage is more useful than the salt that saturates the average American diet.

In Jesus' day, salt was much more than a seasoning. In a time when there was no refrigeration, salt was an important ingredient in the **preservation** of food.

Without it, Jesus' listeners would have had to deal with rotting meat or fish. Similarly, believers find themselves in the business of **preservation** against decay.

- Our worldly culture is rotting: Deep partisan rifts result in fruitless shouting matches. People feel alone in the world even though they are more connected than ever. Parents fear for the future of their nation and their children.
- While some clamor that this brave new world is an improvement upon times past, Christians in this generation, and in every generation, know that something is not right. The Bible tells us that the creation is *groaning* for the coming of Jesus, the last Adam, to set things right, and believers groan for it too (Rom. 8:22-23). Christians can smell the rot of a culture that has turned from the precepts of the Lord.
- So Christians are called to be the salt of the earth, **preserving** the world from social and moral decay by proclaiming and living the truth of God’s Word for a people who need it. We are called to be a remnant of faithful disciples who maintain their saltiness and their preserving power, all for the glory of God.
- If we are going to preserve the world from social and moral decay we must ensure that the idols of our world have not crept into the church.

Walter Brueggman said, “The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us. The prophetic tasks of the church are to tell the truth in a society that lives in illusion, grieve in a society that practices denial, and express hope in a society that lives in despair.”

In what ways does our current culture live in an illusion?

How does our society practice denial?

What are some things that have compromised the gospel and the work of the church in our day?

According to Jesus, His followers are the light of the world.

We were made to shine light into the darkest corners of creation for the glory of God.

We do not produce this light.

God’s Word makes it clear that in and of ourselves, all we are capable of producing is darkness (Matt. 6:22-23; John 3:19-20). It is God who lights our lamp (Ps. 18:28), and He lights it through the sacrifice of His one and only Son, Jesus, the true light of the world (John 8:12).

- Jesus goes before us as the perfect example of what it means to be the light of the world. Jesus is the light who shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome Him (John 1:1-5). In Matthew 5:14-16, we have both a *command* and a *hope*.
 - The *command* is to shine our set-apart life in front of a dark and dying world so that by our light the true light—Jesus—might be illuminated for those lost in the darkness.
 - The *hope* is that no matter how dark this world might be, it will not overcome the true light

of God.

- While it might be very easy for a little girl in Sunday School to shout her bold “no” about hiding her light under a bushel, she will eventually grow up to realize that light can illuminate some frightening things. That “little light” might also put a target on her back.
- Rather than teach His followers to fear the darkness, Jesus—whose confrontation with the darkness would lead to His own crucifixion—calls His disciples to boldness in the face of ridicule, isolation, and persecution. Jesus’ identity as the true light of the world reminds us that no matter the results of our shining for **“Mission of the Church”**: The church is a sign and instrument of the kingdom of God, a people united by faith in the gospel announcement of the crucified and risen King Jesus.

The mission of the church is to go into the world in the power of the Spirit and make **disciples** by proclaiming this gospel, calling people to respond in ongoing repentance and faith, and demonstrating the truth and power of the gospel by living under the **lordship** of Christ for the **glory** of God and the **good** of the world.

Point 2: Jesus’ disciples are to obey for God’s glory, not their own (Matt. 6:1-4).

READ: read Matthew 6:1-4

- 1 “Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.**
 - 2 “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**
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Jesus calls disciples to exemplary behavior as salt and light in the world, but then He cautions against misplaced motives in the midst of that exemplary behavior. He is not merely concerned with outward conformity to His precepts but with the right ordering of inward priorities. While our good works may be seen in the world, they are not to be practiced for show.

- We cannot confuse the *show* of “righteousness” with *actual* righteousness. Saying or doing all of the right things before human beings to bring ourselves glory is not true obedience to God.

Social media might make the task of glorifying God seem easy.

Just upload a poignant Scripture passage or inspired thought from the comfort of your own couch and *voilà*—Christian duty fulfilled.

But two thousand years before Facebook®, Voxel®, or the iPhone® existed, Jesus warned that our

righteousness is not to be practiced for show.

In the age of the Internet, it is easy to practice our “righteousness” before human beings, just as it is easy to confuse empty practices for righteousness.

The draw to get likes, retweets, and followers is real.

It can be easy to invest so much energy into becoming influencers in our particular sphere that the focus shifts to our own renown. Though our obsession may appear righteous outwardly, sprinkled with all of the right words, causes, and images, it can be completely self-centered.

What are some ways we may be tempted to practice our righteousness for personal glory?

Whether we’re gathering signatures for an important cause, trying to raise awareness by using a hashtag, or posting a quote or picture for our upcoming Bible study, it is easier than ever to be *disobedient* to Jesus’ words.

Applause is so readily available to us from those in our immediate communities and from notifications on social media that we don’t need literal trumpets to call attention to our good deeds.

While we are to shine our light before men, this light of good deeds is to be shone not for our own praise or glory but that others might glorify our Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

In this way we will be rewarded by God. Jesus teaches that our reward should not be in the applause or approval of human beings but in Him instead. His reward far outweighs the temporary reward that the trumpeters would receive from anyone who would listen.

- As an example of practicing righteousness with the right priorities, Jesus paints a picture of giving so secret that it could even be secret from one’s own body, that one hand wouldn’t know what good deed the other has done. Using hyperbole, He’s saying that if our other hand knows the good we’ve done, we might be tempted to puff ourselves up and look for the praise of human beings instead of for the praise and reward of God.
 - Our Savior modeled the blinders that He requests of us. Before His sermon on the mountaintop, He lived it for forty days in the wilderness (see Matt. 4:1-11).
 - At His weakest physical point from fasting, Satan tempted Him to turn stones into bread. Satan was asking Jesus to perform miracles not for His Father’s glory but for self-gratification. Jesus saw right through the enemy’s ploy.
 - In fact, His final words to Satan reveal the heart of what Jesus is asking us to do in Matthew 6: “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve’ ” (Matt. 4:10).
 - In reminding us of where we should garner our satisfaction, Christ takes our eyes that strain toward the temporal and directs them toward the eternal.
 - Human praise is a drop in a bucket with a hole in the bottom; God’s reward, however, will fill us to the uttermost.
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Point 3: Jesus’ disciples are to live purposefully (Matt. 7:19-24).

READ Matthew 7:19-24

19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’

23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

24 “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

After giving His listeners a blueprint for Christian living, Jesus issued an important warning: **Outward compliance to Jesus’ commands is not enough to place someone in the kingdom of God.** You can look really good by the things you say and do.

Prophesying, casting out demons, and performing miracles would seem like the pinnacle of good works to perform for the glory of Jesus’ name. But just as it is possible to do good works as a show before human beings, it is possible to do good works as a show before God Himself—and He rejects all such shows.

Illustration: Jesus’ own disciple Judas would become a chilling illustration of the truth that **outward compliance** is meaningless. He followed Jesus for the three years of His earthly ministry.

He heard the sermons, saw the miracles, and was handpicked by the Messiah. If anyone knew all the right things to say and do to persuade people that he was a Christ-follower in *every* sense of the word, it was Judas.

And yet, with a simple kiss, he revealed his lack of faith in the Lord Jesus (Matt. 26:47-50). Judas sat at Jesus’ Passover table and proclaimed his innocence on the very night Jesus was arrested, but by the time Judas told Jesus that he would never betray the “Rabbi” (notice, not “Lord”), he had already done it (see Matt. 26:14-16,20-25).

For thirty pieces of silver, Judas showed that his **outward compliance** during Jesus’ earthly ministry was all for show.

While one’s semblance of fruit might fool casual onlookers temporarily, God is not deceived.

People may not get caught in their webs of deceit until the day of judgment, but it *will* catch up with them.

Jesus sees through **outward compliance**.

So we would do well to do the will of the Father, to pray to Him for a growing faith in Jesus, and to test

What is the difference between outward compliance to Christ’s commands and inward conformity to Christ’s

lordship?

While we might think of the Pharisees as the villains in the Gospel stories, in their time, they were presumed to be the heroes. Known for their religious knowledge and piety, they appeared to keep the law of God near perfectly. They were so intent on keeping the law of God that they erected secondary laws *around* God's laws in order to make perfectly sure that they stayed on the right path. In the midst of the Greco-Roman immorality of their day, they maintained a strict code of righteousness that was seen as exemplary. Yet for all their "righteousness," they still could not enter the kingdom of heaven because it was a righteousness of show instead of a righteousness from faith (Matt. 5:20).

Even though it's unlikely that we could ever appear as righteous as a Pharisee in Jesus' day, we could fool everyone around us pretty easily. In fact, we could even fool ourselves. We could actually believe that our righteous acts are our saving grace instead of the blood of Jesus. But just like the Pharisees, we would be sorely mistaken. Our spiritual houses would not be built on the firm foundation of Jesus' righteousness but on the shaky and meaningless foundation of outward compliance.

So we must hear Jesus' words in faith and act on them in faith.