

- ***READ Matthew 5:1-16/PRAYER*** Every person that is a parent can probably think back to a memory of your child as a baby doing something that you think is just the cutest thing that any baby can ever do. For me with Olivia, that thing is her pointing her little right index skyward and waving it back and forth as I sing "This Little Light of Mine" to her. We all know the song well. *"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine! Won't let Satan *poof* it out, I'm gonna let it shine! Hind it under a bushel, No! I'm gonna let it shine! Let it shine all the time let it shine!"* This song, while simple and memorable, actually does put forth an important and strong message that we hope will resonate with our children for many years which is why we teach these songs to our kids in the first place is it not?
- So what is the point of this well known children song? What was Jesus talking about when he mentions that His disciples, those who are citizens of His Kingdom are lights of the world? I would like to take some time to remind us our the importance of shining our light as Christians. It is important to take some time to be reminded from time to time about those things that we learn even at the earliest of ages, especially when those lessons teach us vitally important aspects of our lives as disciples.

I. Our light is our influence.

- A. How do we know that this is what Jesus is talking about? Consider the two descriptions that he uses in the immediate context. Notice that even before he brings up light, Jesus says that Kingdom citizens are the salt of the earth. He warns about salt becoming tasteless, but why? Let me suggest that it is because tasteless salt is useless. In fact, Jesus says as much. If the salt loses its flavor then what good is it? It might as well be thrown out. **(v.13)**
- B. But why does the flavor matter in salt? It's because salt is used as something that has a major influence on food. For any of you that watch the cooking channel, what is probably the most common critique that is given against the contestant chefs? "This just needs some more salt!" Salt influences food to taste better. It has that type of positive influence on it, and light just the same is an influential factor.
- C. Just as salt livens up bland food, so light illuminates darkness and reveals reality. Notice what Jesus mentions about the lights. He says that a city set on a hill could not be hidden, and why is that? It is because the lights from the city will shine all around it and be seen from all of the things below. That's just how it is. It's lights have an effect on those things around it.
- D. However, just as salt can lose its flavor, so can light be covered up or darkened. It could be that that light is covered up or dimmed all together. What good does that light do? It does no good at all. So just like the salt influences food and light illuminates those things around it...so ought Christians to have a positive influence on those around them. But how can that be done?

II. Our influence is determined by our character.

- A. The determining factor as to whether or not we will have a positive influence on those around us is determined by our character. The substance of our hearts which is displayed in who we are as individuals will determine whether or not we will live up to being the lights of the world that Jesus expects for us to be.
- B. So how is our character determined? Jesus, in this same sermon on the mount, says that the light of the body is what determined by what the eye sees and takes in. **(Matthew 6:22,23)** If the eye is bad, if we take in things that are not godly or decent...if we allow our hearts to be influenced by ungodly things then our hearts will be darkened and damaged. But if we are able to train our eyes to only take in those things that are good and right then we can have hearts that can create the proper character within us.
- C. And how is that proper character displayed? Again, in this amazing bit of teaching, Jesus in **Matthew 7:15-20** shares that we will know the character of the person by the fruit that they produce. We will know them by the way they behave and live their lives. Therefore, our influence will be determined by our character which is displayed through the way we conduct ourselves in this life. So what type of character ought we to have? Again, let's stay right here in this sermon on the mount and find out.

III. Jesus details the character of Kingdom citizens all throughout the Sermon on the Mount.

- A. We could spend days and days directing and digesting all of the many great teachings of Jesus in these three chapters as they are broken up for us, but let's just skim through and see what Jesus says ought to be our character as Kingdom citizens.

- B. Let's begin with what we refer to as the "Beatitudes" in **Matthew 5:4-11**. These traits mentioned are said to be blessed traits by our Savior. Those who display these things in their lives will be able to find their happiness in the riches blessings of God.
- C. Continuing on, we find Jesus teachings concerning the high standard of holiness that Christians are to strive for. Notice specifically **Matthew 5:19**. He seems to preface the following teachings by saying that even the smallest of these things ought to be kept or the person would risk a poor place in God's Kingdom. These multitudes and those reading as we do were to not settle for mediocrity in their lives and faiths, but they were to strive for greatness. They were to attain to the highest standards of holiness and godliness. They were to seek God with all of there hearts and to pray as Jesus would even pray. They were not to be people who simply said "Lord, Lord" but they were to actually do the will of our Heavenly Father. We are to be a people who don't hide our light or let Satan blow it out, but we are to let it shine bright and boldly before others!
- D. What would be the result of living a life that follows the teachings of this great sermon? Obviously God will be pleased with us, but we will also have a positive and powerful influence on those who are around us from day to day. But what ought we influence them to do? Let's look at that next.

IV. Our godly character ought to influence others to seek out and follow God.

- A. Our influence ought to do as Jesus said and push others to see our good works as Christians and be encouraged to give effort themselves to seek after God's will. We talk about this, but what does it look like practically speaking?
- B. I think it looks like the person coming to work each day working hard, having a good attitude, and making those around them better for it. It looks like the person going through a hard time giving great effort to stay positive and see the blessings of God. It looks like the young person who shuns the temptations of this world in order to show his or her peers the better way of Jesus.
- C. What is the result of the actions of these types of people? It is a friend being encouraged to come to work and do a better job. It looks like a friend asking the Christian how they can stay so positive when their world seems to be falling apart. It looks like the young Christian influencing his or her friends to pursue holiness in their youth. It looks like the preacher being about to have productive studies with those in the community because those prospects know the members of his church and they want to be like that person and have what they have in Jesus Christ.
- D. If we are a people who live life the right way and reap the righteous rewards then other people will want what we have in Jesus. If we fail to do so then we shouldn't be surprised when others aren't exactly jumping over things to be like we are.

The importance of singing our light really is found in the effect it can have on church growth. Sure we want to encourage one another through our good works, but we especially want to influence others to seek out the way that we are on that is leading to heaven. The thing about this though is at it takes effort! It takes effort to let our godly light shine each day, but it is certainly worthwhile when we see our influence helping another needy soul to find the saving grace of Jesus. May God bless us and help us to always shine our lights in such a way that others might truly see our good works and seek to glorify our God who is in heaven.