

God's City Set On A Hill

Text: **Matthew 5: 1-16**

INTRODUCTION :

A. How would *you* describe this congregation ?

1. A small church ?
2. A friendly church ?
3. A conservative church ?
4. And perhaps now becoming an active church ?

B. How would *Jesus* describe this church ?

1. Would He simply describe it by it's location ?
2. Would He describe it by the building in which it meets ?
3. In the N.T. how did Jesus describe HIS church ? (**The church OF Christ**)

C. In the previous two lessons we've observed how Jesus describes each Christians.

1. Jesus describes His followers as being "**the salt of the earth.**"
 - a. The salt which *preserves* the world message of the gospel of Christ.
 - b. The salt which *purifies* the world with the word of truth.
 - c. The salt which *flavors* the world with the essence of God's love.
 - d. The salt which creates within the world a *thirst* for God.
 - e. The salt which though mingled in the world maintains its *distinctive flavor*.
2. He also describes His followers as "**the light of the world**" set up high to enlighten all.
 - a. The light shines forth the *holiness* and *love* of God.
 - b. To become a *Christian* is to become a light. **You're the only light in a dark world.**
 - c. *Wherever* they are, Christian lights shine to enlighten everyone in the room.
 - d. When the lights shine, they bring *glory to God*.
3. Jesus said that light and salt are **attributes** of a Christian, **not** something they do.

D. Today we observe that Jesus describes His followers collectively as

"a city set on a hill." (**Every congregation is a city of God. ... Define city.**)

1. Few cities in the ancient world were set on hills.
 - a. Hills are more easily defended, but cities on a hill are not practical. (**roads in valley**)
 - b. What is the most basic need of a city ? **Water !** Water is seldom found on hilltops.

2. Jerusalem “**the holy city**” was one of the few exceptions. (**Isa. 52:1**)
 - a. It was more than 2500 feet above sea level.
 - b. It could be built there because there was a spring of water there.
 - c. It could be seen for miles in every direction. (**church is new Jerusalem .. Rev 21:2**)

TRANSITION :

Just as Jerusalem, God's holy city of old, was set on a hill to be admired by all, so His church, His holy city in the Christian age, is also lifted up for all to see.

I. Trying to hide a city on a hill is the ultimate foolishness. (*above obstacles*)

A. Most cities were made of white limestone.

1. It was the most plentiful building material available in the area.
2. By day, the city glistens in the sun.

B. At night the lights of the city could be seen from afar.

1. People built houses along the walls and their lights shown.
2. Many lights combined make a glow in the sky. (**obscure stars**)

ILL. - Even on a small rise a light can be seen far away across the prairie.

C. God wants each individual part to be seen; thus, He wants the whole to be seen.

1. Each individual Christian is salt.
 - a. Salt affects everything with which it comes in contact.
 - b. It's only value is in the affect it has on other things.
 - c. The more salt, the greater the affect. (**Thus, the more Christians the**)
2. If light exists it shines. (**essence, characteristic, attribute**)
 - a. Not even a fool turns on a light and hides it. Light's sole function is to be seen.
 - b. Wherever light shines it eliminates darkness.
 - c. The more lights, the brighter they shine.
3. The church is a collection of salt and light.
 - a. No part of the salt stops being savory because other salt is present.
 - b. No light stops shining because there are other lights around.
 - c. **Christians do not stop savoring or shining when other Christians are around.**

II. The church is the sum total of all it's parts ... lights and salt.

A. Because Christians are light and salt, they do not change.

1. Nature teaches us this principle.
 - a. When a fish is pulled out of the water it doesn't suddenly start breathing & walking.
 - b. When a Crappie is separated from its school it does not suddenly become a Shad.
2. Likewise, when a Christian is taken out of his element he does not change what he IS.
 - a. Like a chameleon, the hypocrite changes to blend in with his circumstances.
 - b. Whether in or out of the assembly, the Christian is what he is ... light and salt.
3. The true nature of the Christians is tested OUTSIDE of the assembly, not in it.
 - a. One small light shining among many lights may go unnoticed. (in assembly)
 - b. Even a very small light is clearly visible in the dark.

B. Grouping small lights together produces a bright light.

1. The many small lights of a city produce a glow in the night sky.
2. Each light glowing in its place produces an affect beyond its own location.
3. Putting all the lights together produces a greater affect. (congregations shine brighter)

C. This is how God describes HIS church :

1. Each Christian is to glow wherever he goes.
2. The cumulative effect of all the Christians shining is a glow in the whole community.
3. When Christians function as the church, they produce bright beacon of light.

D. The church is not a compound created by mixing ingredients.

1. When a variety of ingredients are mixed they all combine to make something different.
 - a. A cake does not taste like any one of the ingredients. (flour, sugar, eggs, oil, etc.)
 - b. Each ingredient surrenders it individual attributes. (The church is not like this.)
2. When one adds more of the same ingredient, he changes only the volume.
 - a. The taste of that ingredient does not change as the volume increases.
 - b. The character (attributes) of that ingredient does not change.
3. Every member of the church is light and salt.
 - a. The more members the brighter the light congregation will shine.
 - b. The darker the night, the brighter the light appears.
 - c. Each light is different in wattage, but all are light.

III. What does this mean to our congregation ?

A. If this congregation is to be faithful, we must shine in the community.

1. Our shining must become as natural as fish swimming in the lake.
 - a. God's lights shine.
 - b. God's salt flavors and preserves.
 - c. God's congregation will be visible to all. (**Be seen. Be known. Glorify.**)
2. The reverse is also true; if we are not shining we are not God's congregation.
 - a. If people in the community don't know who and what we are, we're not shining.
 - b. If people in the community don't know where we're located, we're not shining.
 - c. If people in the community don't identify us as God's shining city we're not shining.

B. We must understand that being God's shining city is NOT optional.

1. Just as God is defined as being "**Love**", God defines us as being His "**city on a hill.**"
2. We all understand this to be a clear expression of God's will. **It's clearly stated.**
3. To understand God's will and refuse to do it is a willful sin.

Heb. 10: 26-27 For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷ but a terrifying expectation of judgment and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.

C. The modern Pharisees have lead many sincere brethren into error ...

"Just believe right and keep the rules and God will have to accept you." (**glass egg**)

1. No one can earn his own salvation. (**Eph. 2:8-9**) **Faith produces fruit in life.**
2. Just holding services and restraining from errors does NOT constitute faithfulness.
Note : **Not holding services and teaching error can constitute unfaithfulness.**
3. The Lord makes **DAILY** demands on our life.
 - a. **Luke 9: 23-** And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he **must** deny himself, and take up his cross **daily** and follow Me."
 - b. **Luke 11: 23-** He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not **gather with Me**, scatters.
4. Christianity is more than believing the correct doctrine and going to church on Sunday.
 - a. **Read & Exegete ... Rom. 6: 15-23** To be a Christian is to be a servant.
 - b. **I Cor. 6: 20-** For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.
 - c. **Read & Exegete ... II Cor. 5: 14-19** Every Christian is a minister to reconcile.

IV. How do we apply this teaching ? *God has a use for those he purchases.*

A. We need to wake up, to get up and to speak up.

1. Each and every light needs to shine. (**We must get out from under the basket.**)
2. The collective light is made up of each individual light.

ILL. – Cities are not seen because of one light.

B. Each light needs to glorify God.

1. If every member said just one positive thing to one new person each week.
 - a. There has to be something you like about the church; **tell it.**
 - 1) The Singing
 - 2) The Fellowship
 - 3) Events (Seminar, VBS, Gospel Meeting, Singing, etc.)
 - b. *"I just don't know how I would have made it through ____ without the brethren ..."*
2. Every member knows people that no other member knows.
3. Weave good things about the church into family conversations.

C. Choose 5 people as your special project. (or just 2)

1. Pray for them every day.
2. Send cards, send encouraging notes, send positive uplifting tracts. (**see me**)
3. Call and / or visit them regularly.
4. Give their names to the elders or to the preacher. (**Asked, but no response.**)

D. Suggest and support church activity.

1. When we have an activity every member needs to get involved :
 - a. Invite your friends and neighbors to come with you.
 - b. Enthusiastically talk it up with your family members.
 - c. Help with the advertising. (**Word of mouth starts with you.**)

*** If past results are any indication :** 1) **We're to be pitied – because no friends.**
 2) **We just don't care. (rebels against God)**
2. We have to do some different things if we expect different results.
 - a. Share your ideas with the elders. (**Everyone has at least one good idea.**)
 - b. No one thing will be the total answer. **We need many ideas.**

3. No one likes or enjoys all activities, but we all have a responsibility to God's church.
 - a. We can't support only what we like or enjoy.
 - b. We can't support only what we find convenient.
 - c. **The cross was neither enjoyable nor convenient.**

CONCLUSION :

A. **A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;** (*This congregation is God's City on a hill.*)

1. When we're functioning as God requires, **people will observe us.**
2. When we're functioning as God requires, **people will glorify God as a result.**

B. **We've circled this mountain long enough; we must become that city.**

1. If we are God's people we will do so. (**If not, we aren't.**)
2. Thus, the decision is, Do we want to become God's people or not ?
3. In order to be God's people we must :
 - a. Be seen,
 - b. Bring glory to God.

C. **When a congregation is not zealous in service to God HE rejects them.**

1. **The church at Ephesus :**

Rev. 2: 5- *Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent.*

2. **The church at Laodicea :**

Rev. 3: 15-16 *I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. ¹⁶ So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.*

3. These congregation viewed themselves as faithful, **but God rejected them.**
 - a. They withstood false teachers, **but God rejected them.**
 - b. Other congregations viewed them as faithful churches, **but God rejected them.**

D. **How does God view us ?**

1. Will He lift us up as an example for others ?
2. Will He remove our lampstand and cast us from His body.

Let this church commit ourselves to be God's city on this hill and to glorify Him by our deeds.