

City On A Hill

Matthew 5:13-16

Mark 9:49-50

Philippians 2:14-15

Parables of Jesus

This teaching is part of what we call the **Sermon on the Mount**. Jesus is teaching a different way of life than what is expected. He is introducing his kingdom, and the opposite way of living.

He says that the meek will inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5).

This is in direct contradiction to those who strive to gain power. He says to obtain mercy you must be merciful, and you are blessed when people speak badly of you for Jesus' sake. The things he was teaching were paradoxes; they were seemingly contradictory and absurd to some, but strangely true. This was not what people were expecting from the Messiah. He is showing that we are called to be different; we are representatives of heaven.

Jesus says that we are the salt of the earth.

Discuss:

What is salt? What is it used for?

One use of salt is for preservation.

Food that is preserved in salt can be kept indefinitely without any refrigeration and it will not spoil.

Salt makes things last; it makes them endure for a long time.

Salt purifies; it is used for purity. If you have a wound, you can soak it in salt to get the impurities out.

Salt was used with the sacrifices; it was commanded to be used for every offering. It was called the salt of the covenant (Leviticus 2:13; Mark 9:49).

Salt was necessary; without salt the offering was unacceptable.

Salt is an enhancer; it brings out flavor that is already present and makes it stronger.

Through medical science, we know that salt is necessary for life. It helps prevent dehydration; it is essential for transmitting nerve impulses. It is needed for muscles to contract and relax. Salt maintains a stable blood pressure which is necessary for proper circulation. And it also helps the body absorb other nutrients.

Salt is essential to life. Then Jesus mentions salt that has lost its flavor is useless, and is not good for anything except to be cast out.

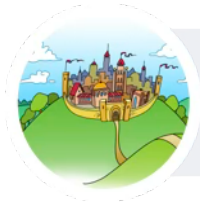
Jesus then says that we are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Discuss:

What does that mean?

A city on a hill is visible to everyone around. A city on the top of the hill shows everyone that there is some sort of civilization in that area. It shows that there is an established governing body, it shows that the area is inhabited, and there is life happening in that region.

What about at night? The city would provide light that would be visible from a great distance. If someone needed assistance, they would have a light to follow, they would know where to go where there would be an established place where they should be able to find someone to help them.



City On A Hill

A study of these words in the original Hebrew text of the Old Testament show that Jesus is making reference back to Isaiah.

Isaiah 2:1-5 is a description of the Lord's house that is established on the top of the mountain.

Mountains were places where it was believed that heaven touched earth. This house of the Lord is taller than all the hills, and all the nations flow to it. This refers to the garden of Eden where four rivers flowed away from the garden, but now nations are flowing back to the city to receive teaching from the Lord (Torah).

Things have changed; their swords and spears have been turned into tools where they do not learn war anymore.

The Lord shines on this house on the top of the hill. But Jesus tells us that WE are the city on the hill. We are the ones that the Lord is shining on, and we are called to represent Christ as his body. We are to be the light that draws people to the instruction of the Lord.

This is a whole new way of life. We walk in peace, not war. It is a connection back to the garden of Eden, where man walked with God in the garden (Genesis 3:8). This is a reflection of the New Covenant. Believers in Christ are not under the Old Testament covenant given to Moses. Israel was under that covenant; they were meant to be a light to the nations, bringing God to the people of the world; but they failed.

Now we have a New Covenant; a fresh start that is only possible through Christ and his Spirit living in us (Romans 8:9). Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant to bring about the New Covenant.

When we believe in Christ we are changed, we are completely new (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). We are now members of the body of Christ (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 20) and we are to be the light that brings Christ to the world (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-13).

So what does all this mean?

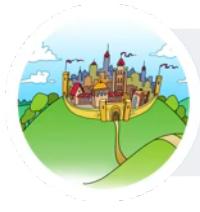
It means we are representatives of Jesus, and we are called to be different.

We should not look like the rest of the world; we should not act like the rest of the world. We are called out, separate, royal, a priesthood, holy, called out of darkness into light to represent Christ (1 Peter 2:9). We should be the wise man who listens to these teachings of Jesus and *does* them (Matthew 7:24). Jesus describes a new way of living, the upside down kingdom of doing things the opposite way of what is expected.

Jesus is also referring back to Isaiah 42:1-7. Jesus is THE servant, but as followers of Jesus and part of the body of Christ, this also means us. The Spirit of God is on us and we are to bring judgment to the nations (Isaiah 42:1).

We are given as a covenant to the people, and a light for the Gentiles (Isaiah 42:6; Isaiah 49:6).

In this kingdom, what does justice look like? It isn't what you might think. This justice is in righteousness; it opens blind eyes and releases prisoners (Isaiah 42:7). We are to represent Christ and bring freedom and light to the nations and give glory to the Lord. We walk in the light, as he is in the light. We are the city of the Lord, set on the hill (Matthew 5:14; Isaiah 60:14).



City On A Hill

The apostle Paul also references this light that we represent in **Philippians 2:14-15**. He tells us to do everything without complaining, disputing, arguing.

By doing this we are different. Everyone naturally complains, argues, and disputes. This is what caused many problems for the Israelites in the desert, and God called this complaining - "an evil heart of unbelief," (Hebrews 3:12). Complaining and disputing takes away faith. You are no longer focused on what God can and will do for you. If you don't do this, you will be blameless. You will stand out in the middle of all the evil around you, and you will shine like a light in the world. Does this sound familiar? You will be a shining light, and you will be noticed as different.

Discuss:

Could it be possible that when God looks at the world that he sees lights?

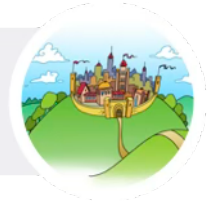
Could it be that he sees us, followers of Christ, shining out as different when we do things cheerfully, happily, shining as lights in the world for Jesus?

Jesus stated that we should:

'Let our light shine'.

We do this by letting people see our good works, and then they will glorify God. None of this is intended to bring glory to ourselves. We do good works like bringing freedom, opening blind eyes and bringing the kingdom to the world. We are living examples of this kingdom lifestyle that looks so different from everything else around us. And when we live this type of life, others see us, and it brings glory to God.

Jesus in the Story



Jesus IS the servant in Isaiah 42.

Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12; John 9:5).

But now that Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father (Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22) we are his body here on the earth. He is no longer here in the flesh, but can do greater things through his body as believers are spread throughout the world doing works in His name.

We are that body of Christ, shining the light of Jesus into the world.

We are to walk in the light, as He is in the light (1 John 1:7).

Lesson Questions & Memory Verses

25. City On A Hill

1. In Matthew 5:13, to what did Jesus compare his followers?
2. What did he compare them to in verse 14?
3. In Matthew 5:15, what does he say that people do with a candle and why?
4. What will people do when they see our good works?

Philippians 2:14-15

Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

26. When You Pray

Read Matthew 6:9-13

1. We are supposed to ask God for what to be done on earth and in heaven?
2. What does God want us to ask him for every day?
3. We are supposed to ask for forgiveness in the same way that we do what?

1 Timothy 2:8

I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.

27. Into the Ditch

1. What do people try to pull out of other's eyes?
2. What does the scripture say is in our eye?
3. How can we see to take something out of someone else's eye?
4. Explain what you think this means.

Matthew 7:1-2

Judge not, that you not be judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.

28. How Much More?

1. If we ask, what will happen?
2. What happens for everyone that asks?
3. What happens for everyone that seeks?
4. What happens when we knock?

James 1:17

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning.



