

Sermon: Christ-Centered People  
Scripture: Matthew 5:13-20; 1 Corinthians 2:1-12  
Mission Sunday  
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Our first Scripture reading comes from Matthew 5:13-20. Earlier in this chapter, which is the beatitudes, it identifies the people whom will be bless – people who will be the ones ministered to. In today’s passage following the identification of to whom Christ is sent to, Jesus lets the people know – the Christ followers, what their mission is and who they are meant to be before explaining what the purpose or mission of him being with us. Here now, the Word of the Lord.

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all 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.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Our second Scripture reading is from 1 Corinthians 2:1-12. Paul explains to the Christ followers in Corinth his motivation and the purpose of his ministry. Paul shares that we are led by the Spirit of God, and we need to be open to the Spirit which is sent to us. Hear now the Word of God through Paul this morning.

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the testimony of God to you with superior speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were made not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are being destroyed. But we speak God’s wisdom, a hidden mystery, which God decreed before the ages for our glory and which none of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the human heart conceived,  
what God has prepared for those who love God”—

God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God’s except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.

Let us pray. Holy and Loving God, who is our God Emmanuel, we thank you for giving us new mercies this morning and leading us to come and worship together as the body of Christ. Give us the nourishment and strength that we need to give our best for this day, that we may bring honor and glory to you. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing to you, our Rock and Redeemer. Amen.

One of the most realistic questions that I received from a child in my ministry has been this question: “Pastor Christian, we can’t fix all the worldly problems. Why do we keep doing what we do?” My heart sunk when I heard these questions for couple of reasons: first, a young person has been seeing the world so practically that they lost to dream big dream and was already thinking about how they needed to fight through life to just make it in the world. Secondly, this young person was asking the identity question of what it means to be a Christian, and many times we have been giving a simple, Sunday school answer, because Jesus or the Bible said so, while these young people are critically thinking and trying to determine if it is worth the effort to transpose their beliefs into an action in their lifetime.

The world is making progress due to many people who cares and are generous for others. Take world hunger for an example. It has been drastically lowered in recent years, as massive efforts have gone towards ending world hunger. Yet, according to the latest data from UNICEF in 2018, 3.1 million children die every year from undernutrition; that is just under 8,500 children a day, and that is 8,500 children too many. World still has big problems yet when good people gather to address the big problems, they come up with big solutions.

Today’s passage says:

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,  
nor the human heart conceived,  
what God has prepared for those who love God.

What we must understand, that sometimes, we don’t have to have all the solutions to do the righteous thing, and trust that God will show us the way along our journey. What we must remember is that sometimes what we may something is unsolvable, yet in the face of God, nothing is impossible. Why do we keep doing what we do as a Christian? Because “We are debtors to every man to give him the gospel in the same measure in which we have received it.”<sup>1</sup> Because we the Christ followers are told to bring the Christ’s message to the ends of the earth, and witness God showing up – to witness God doing wonderful things with people, through the people of God who are Christ-centered: those who are called with a unique purpose, talents and gifts. By sharing what God has endowed upon them to solve the big problems of the world. and to see how God will unravel God’s blessings upon those whom we are called to walk alongside.

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. P.F. Bresee

Our mission to the ends of the earth or to our neighbors who are right nearby is very simple and same, regardless of the magnitude of their needs. It is to bring our Christ-centered hearts – and share the good news. What is the good news? The elevator pitch line would be that I have been chosen by God to be loved, and so are you. Let me share with you what it feels like to be chosen by God.

Lately, there has been many drawings of lottery that has gone above \$500 million. What is the current lotto up to? One of the two should be approaching above \$700 million, right? If you bought a lotto ticket, don't you buy the lotto ticket hoping that it is your numbers that are being chosen? What would you feel like if you won it? Yet would it compare to the genuine pure love that comes your way? To be wanted, desired, and chosen just for who you are? And what if that person who loves you has a bank that is so grand, all earthly things combined together is not comparable to the riches, what if there is a house that your room and a place on the dining table with your name on it that feasts every meal? Would it compare to the whatever jackpot number that is on a large billboard?

Being chosen, being loved by God is worth more than anything and it has more value than all the precious gems combined. This is the good news; this is the message that we are asked to deliver to those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, who are meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, so that they may be blessed, to know that they too are chosen and loved, just like one of us and those who are in God's heart.

When Paul speaks of knowing nothing, but Christ crucified, is it not what we are asked to do and mirror?

To response to the same love, we have received and been chosen by God, we share this news, for it is so good and there are too much love to keep to ourselves, just like one of my favorite stories in 2 Kings 7. We have been given much, and much is required of us. When we have been blessed much, we are asked to share in these blessings. We might not tackle all the worldly problems today, but with God's help, we will share our abundance and the good news to the 150 hungry and homeless souls in the city of Springfield. We might not dismantle all the racism in the world, but as the church with abolitionist roots, we take bold steps to move towards balancing unity and celebrating diversity among us, and one way you have done that is calling me as your pastor. We want to be relevant, we want to be once again leaders in bringing justice, equality, and love with our Christ-centeredness, that we view all persons as a child of God and they should be treated and valued equally, as we are in God's eyes.

So, let's borrow some words from today's passage. We are asked to be the salt of the earth – both in terms of our character as the persons we are as well as spiritually, standing firm on Christ as Christ's flock. We are asked to be the light of the world – to bring hope, love, kindness, and faith – to shine the light on injustices and to give God all the glory and honor for the small miracles that takes place in everyday people's lives.

Friends, we simply cannot separate who we are as Christians and the work that we are called to do, which is sharing Christ's love and the good news with our identity. There is no "commission" as Christ-followers without the word "mission" in it. Being a Christian, a Christ follower, who is a Christ-centered person, and shares about Christ crucified is a person who partners and answers God's call in their own way to do God's mission, God's will. Therefore, as children of God, let us join in sharing the good news and see, hear, and discern in our hearts what God has prepared for us, who loves Godly dearly with all our hearts, mind, and soul, on the corner of Walnut and Edwards for next 188 more years to come. Amen.