



Matthew 5:13-16  
A New Economy of Purpose  
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Attention:

Gene A. Getz, in his book, *The Measure of a Church*, asks the question, "What is the measure of maturity in the church?" And he lists what others believe are the measure of maturity: (success)

1. An active church (involving people in meetings and programs)
2. A giving church (supporting the church and efforts financially)
3. A growing church (new people coming and staying)
4. A soul-winning church (leading unbelievers to faith and baptism)
5. A smooth-running church (efficient and orderly)
6. A missionary-minded church (supports missionaries around the world)
7. A Spirit-filled church (enthusiastic, emotional)
8. A big church (large attendance, with many programs)

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE LIGHT

"There is an old story about a lighthouse keeper who worked on a rocky stretch of coastline. Once a month he would receive a new supply of oil to keep the light burning so that ships could safely sail near the rocky coast. One night, though, a woman from a nearby village came and begged him for some oil to keep her family warm. Another time a father asked for some to use in his lamp. Another man needed to lubricate a wheel. Since all the requests seemed legitimate, the lighthouse keeper tried to please everyone and grant the requests of all.

Toward the end of the month, he noticed his supply of oil was dangerously low. Soon it was gone, and one night on the light on the lighthouse went out. As a result, that evening several ships were wrecked and countless lives were lost. When the authorities investigated, the man was very apologetic. He told them he was just trying to be helpful with the oil. Their reply to his excuses, however, was simple and to the point: "You were given oil for one purpose, and one purpose only - to keep that light burning!"

A church faces a similar commission. There is no end to the demands placed on a church's time and resources. As a result, the foundational purposes of a church must remain supreme."

SOURCE: James Emory White, *Rethinking the Church* (Baker Books, 1997), 27-28.

The Beatitudes from last week's study show the nature of true believers. This week, Jesus gives two metaphors to show the purpose of true believers.

- 1) Picture One = Salt: Believers exist to influence the world against **moral decay**. V 13
  - a. Salt is a loaded word in the text:
    - i. Has several uses:
      1. Preservative in a time when there was no refrigeration. – rubbed into meat to prevent spoiling – only way it was useful was to be integrated into the meat = the church is to preserve the world from moral decay by being integrated with the world – in the world, not of the world – John 17:15
      2. Essential element for human life - Without enough salt, muscles don't contract, blood doesn't circulate, food doesn't digest, and hearts don't beat. Low salt levels in the body can produce muscle cramps, nausea, vomiting and dizziness, and eventually, a lack of salt can lead to shock, coma and death.
      3. Seasoning for food – flavor with no calories! – mixed in the food to be effective! - = We must be mixed in with the world to be effective! – Out of the Saltshaker and into the world – Colossians 4:5-6 – speech seasoned with salt
      4. Fertilizer – minor but essential element in fertilizer – again has to be mixed in with the earth to be effective = the church must be mixed in with the world to be effective!
      5. Create thirst – 1 Peter 3:14-15 – be prepared to give reason for the hope that is in you. The world will likely not like the reason you give – 1 Corinthians 1:18 “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God!” – Again to create thirst, the salt has to enter the body! = The church must enter the world to create that thirst.
      6. Healing properties – increases the production of red blood cells and albumin, a protein found in human tissue. – But it stings! – Again – only effective if it enters the wound – the church is only effective if it enters the world!
    - ii. Which uses is intended? – maybe all but primarily preservation from moral decay
      1. Why focus on preservation? – can salt become unsalty? No – idea is that it becomes so mixed in with other things that it can no longer act as a preservative – to be disqualified for service!
      2. what happens when the church is raptured? – Evil rampant on earth for 7 years!
  - b. The real point we have to hear is that if we will serve our purpose, we cannot do so inside the walls of the church or only in church events and activities! We will do so by living as God has commanded in the context of our world!
- 2) Picture Two = Light: Believers exist to influence the world by **displaying spiritual knowledge**.v14-15
  - a. Light from “phos” – literally a light
  - b. Figuratively– referring to moral and spiritual light and knowledge that enlightens the mind – so here, as in John 8:12 – Jesus said “I am the light of the world.” – a dispenser of moral and spiritual knowledge
  - c. When Jesus said, I am the light of the world, he was saying, I have come to tell you about the Kingdom of God. I am his express image, the radiance of His glory, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father. I have come to show you the way, in fact namely that I am the way. I am the expression of God’s character on earth: love, mercy, wrath, power etc.
  - d. When Jesus said, you are the light of the world, he was saying, - Believer, you are, not you will be, you are right now an expression of God’s character on earth. Not only were you

made in the image of God but you have been reborn into my image and are being transformed into becoming like me. Just as I showed the world God's character, you now do the same – your life is an open letter for all the world to see. Your failure only declares His grace, your weakness only declares His strength, your success only declares His power!

- e. Jesus gives two further illustrations to refine the understanding of what it means to be the light of the world
    - i. City on a hill – a high and prominent place that is seen by everyone around in the valleys
    - ii. Lamp on a lampstand – Jewish lamps were meager and therefore placed on a tall lampstand so that the light could spread more broadly in the home
  - f. Again, we are told that to fulfill our purpose we must be engaged in the world!
  - g. What is the highest place in our community? – not in sense of elevation but prominence?
    - i. Friday night football – not the same since 4 high schools but still prominent
    - ii. EBYAO – youth sports?
    - iii. Upward is great, I love its message and motivation, Caz McCaslin is a godly man
    - iv. We choose to play EBYAO – namely to interact with and live before the world in a godly way.
    - v. Many church buildings including many clc or flc which is christianese for gym were built with the intent of reaching and drawing people to Christ but often times they have served no more purpose than being a safe place for Christians to play so they do not have to hear ugly words or be with morally challenged people who are not like them!
    - vi. In many cases church properties are no more inviting than a Masonic or Mormon temple with its darkened windows and guarded doors that exclude all those who are not in the club!
    - vii. Oh church, is it possible that years of programming is all wrong and that what God really intended was that we not create ministry “centers” called buildings to invite people to during ministry events but that we become ministry centers called people that we humbly invade our neighbors lives with to do ministry called holy living?
    - viii. **Philippians 2:13-15**
- 3) Both pictures point to the goal that all believers exist to **glorify God**. V 16
- a. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
  - b. All creation declares God's glory
    - i. Creation – Psalm 19:1 “The heavens declare the glory of God and the sky above proclaims his handiwork”
    - ii. Christ gives God glory
      1. Hebrews 1:4 – the radiance of His glory
      2. John 11:40-42
      3. John 17:1-11
  - c. As a believer you exist to reflect God's glory!
    - i. Psalm 22:23 “You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him, and stand in awe of him”
    - ii. Psalm 29:1-2 Give unto the LORD, O ye mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength. Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name.”
  - d. How do we reflect God's glory?

- i. By very existence as a believer! – You are a trophy of His grace! Your life tells of His power to change lives!
  1. Ephesians 1:12 so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory
- ii. Activities yes –
  1. Psalm 50:23 - The one who offers thanksgiving as his sacrifice glorifies me
  2. 1 Corinthians 6:20 - for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. – sexual purity
  3. 1 Corinthians 10:31 - So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. – whatever you do, eating or drinking
  4. 1 Peter 4:16 - Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God – in suffering
  5. John 21:19 - This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.)
  6. But be careful here because sometimes we can do works to gain man's glory not display God's glory – Matthew 6:1ff
- iii. By displaying the nature of those in the Kingdom – namely the Beatitudes!
  1. “Followers of Jesus possess kingdom life that produces good deeds from a changed life” Michael Wilkins The NIV Application Commentary – Matthew page 216 Zondervan
  2. We do not manufacture stuff to bring God glory, we simply reflect god's glory
  3. I'M ONLY A MIRROR FRAGMENT

I want to share with you a story about a very interesting well-educated Greek philosopher whose name is Dr. Alexander Popaderos. And Dr. Popaderos every summer on the island of Crete taught a class on ethics for two weeks. And this particular summer just as he was getting ready to close the class, the last few minutes of the class, he said, “Now are there any questions before we go?” And just as he was getting ready to say, “OK then you're dismissed,” a little man in the back of the room, a rather timid looking man, sort of carefully raised his hand and said, “Dr. Popaderos,” “Yes” “I have a question” “Yes, what is it?” He said, “I'd like to know, what is the meaning of life?”

As you can imagine, people were ready to go home, and they were very irritated by this little fellow's heavy question!

Dr. Popaderos very quickly quieted the group, he said to the class, “You know, if you don't mind I'd like to answer that question.” He reached into his back pocket, and took out his wallet. He took out of the wallet a little mirror about the size of a fifty-cent piece, honed down on the edges, kind of sparkling. And then he told this tale, he said, “When I was a child, I began to realize that I could have so much fun with that mirror. I would simply catch the glint of the Sun, and shine that mirror into an otherwise darkened place. As I grew older I began to learn that this is no child's toy. This is really a metaphor for my life. Now I am not the light—I am not the source of the light. I am simply a broken mirror fragment. But if I allow the sun to shine on my mirror fragment, it is amazing what light I can bring into darkness.” Then he said, “Ladies and

Gentlemen, that is the meaning of life.”

Each of us is a mirror fragment. We are not the Light. We are not the source of the Light. We are simply a broken mirror fragment. But when we permit the SON to hit our mirror fragment, and then bounce off into the life of a darkened heart, there can be change, there can be illumination.

4. Difference between microscope and telescope – microscope takes that which is very small and magnifies it so that it can be seen and studied. A telescope takes that which is very large and makes it smaller so it can be seen and studied

Closing:

2 Corinthians 3:18

On September 24, 2001, the day my daughter was born, I was not the first to really see her. I mean yes, granted I had a better vantage point in the room than Shelley and even got to cut the cord while the doctor held her. But that day, the midwife wasn't the first to see her, nor was the nurses, not even I was. In fact, I wasn't even looking at her when I first saw her. It wasn't until they placed Kaylee into Shelley's arms that I got my first glimpse of the weight and glory of the moment and of my daughter. I saw Shelley's eyes captured by the precious little girl she had just given birth to. The eyes that had been for only me now had a new prize and as I watched tears of joy rolling down her face, it was then I saw Kaylee for the first time, not by looking at her but looking at the inexpressible love and devotion in her mother's eyes!

Could it be that the answer to all of this is that our eyes have been turned away from all the earthly pursuits that once drew them and now have been captured by God in all of His glory. That part of that beholding God's glory with an unveiled face is that there is now nothing between God and us because of the work of Christ. We get lost in God's glory and love and sometimes even are brought to tears of joy and gratitude for our salvation and his love and mercy and grace. But part of that beholding with an unveiled face is that our face is not hidden from the world and that while we are lost in His glory, God brings into our path people who have never seen Him, who now catch a glimpse of Him, not by looking for or at Him necessarily but by seeing a reflection of His glory in our eyes that are full of love and devotion toward Him.

We began this message by asking Gene Getz's question about what the measure of a mature or successful church was and we offered several possibilities. All of them are good but none of them are the true measure. The measure of a successful or mature church is that they glorify God.

Church, believers, we exist to glorify God. We do that first and foremost by being overwhelmed by his glory.