

The Sermon Connection

Connecting Sunday's Teaching to Everyday Living

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The Sermon Connection is a weekly handout to help you apply Sunday's sermon content to your everyday life. It is designed to give you additional insights and practical tools for applying the teaching throughout the week.

The application, reflection and connection questions may also serve as a springboard for discussion in your small group, your family time, or in one-on-one conversations.

The Counter-Cultural Life of The Kingdom Upside Down or Right Side Up? Sermon by Calvin Brown August 27, 2017

This week Pastor Calvin continued our series based on The Sermon on the Mount. He shared that many years ago he learned a breakthrough lesson about golf that is counter-intuitive. A light grip on the golf club produces a more powerful and productive swing than a tight grip. He showed how in The Beatitudes, Jesus similarly teaches that the Christian life is counter-cultural. The world has a way of thinking and behaving which is not compatible with Kingdom living. In this week's passage, Jesus explains a way of experiencing life and relationships that will have some surprising results.

First, in v. 7, Jesus says merciful people will be shown mercy. Calvin explained that as "experiments" of God's mercy, we should become agents of that mercy to others. We need to learn to "absorb" the sins of others by forgiving them without drama. He used Ephesians 4:31-32 to illustrate what Jesus was saying. It has been said that "forgiven people forgive people." The standard given here – "forgiving each other as God in Christ has forgiven you" – leaves us without excuse when it comes to showing mercy to others.

Second, Calvin showed how Jesus says (in verse 8) that the pure in heart will see God. The Christian life calls for an undivided and uncompromising devotion to the will of God – pure and undivided. That kind of commitment to the will of God will eventually reveal in our lives that His will is good, perfect and pleasing (Romans 12:2). This is one of the ways that believers can "see God." As we devote ourselves to God's will, we are transformed. We no longer conform to the "patterns of this world." In other words, we become counter-cultural. And in that transformation we see God.

Third, forgiven people with an undivided devotion to God's will are peacemakers. We do this in two ways. First of all, we do it by overlooking offenses. Peter tells us to "love one another deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8) We also can be active peacemakers by pursuing peace with others (Romans 12:18). Jesus says that peacemakers will be called sons of God. Our desire to be biblical peacemakers is evidence that we are indeed part of God's family.

Finally, and perhaps the most counter-intuitive revelation in this teaching is that a merciful, devoted, peacemaking person should not expect to be applauded in the world; instead, that person should expect to be persecuted, misunderstood and maligned. Yet, that is the person Jesus is calling you and I to be.

Calvin concluded with Galatians 6:9. In this verse we are exhorted to not grow weary in doing good – for at the proper time we will reap a harvest. The counter-cultural life of the Kingdom requires that our lives be lived for purposes way beyond ourselves!

READING AND REFLECTION:

Read the entire Sermon on the Mount several times (Mt. 5-7). How do The Beatitudes set the stage for the rest of Jesus' teachings?

Now focus on The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). Read them several times. Do you notice any patterns?

Look up the following cross references and write out how they reinforce the teachings of Jesus found in Matthew 5:7-12: Romans 12:1-2; 12:18; 14:17; Galatians 6:9; Ephesians 4:31-32; 5:18; James 3:17; Hebrews 12:14 and 1 Peter 4:8.

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Reflect for a moment on the extent of the sin that God has forgiven you for. Now, list sins that have been committed against you by others. Which ones should you forgive? Which ones should you not forgive?

Does a point of conflict exist in your life – either concerning a decision or a relationship? If so, what does God show in The Bible as His will for that decision or relationship?

Has there been a time in your life where you have been the recipient of someone who has acted as a biblical peacemaker? If so, what did that show you about that person?

COMMUNITY CONNECTION:

2 Timothy 3:12 says “everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” Jesus makes it clear that we will be persecuted as we live out the counter-cultural Kingdom life. As you meet with your family, small group or accountability partner, relate a time when you were reviled, persecuted or slandered because of your faith.

Visit www.persecution.com. Take time to pray for persecuted believers.

KEY POINT:

The Beatitudes aren't something we do; instead, it is a way of thinking and living that occurs as we allow the grace of God to breakthrough in our lives. These character qualities are produced by grace.

Practical Life Application: Be a disturbing non-conformist. Be counter-cultural. Be like Jesus.

RESOURCES:

One Year New Testament Bible (available at the information table)
Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands, Paul David Tripp
Peacemaker Ministries, www.peacemaker.net