

Don't Waste Your Life

Matthew 5.13-16

Introduction:

There is something horrible about a wasted opportunity, isn't there? It makes us groan just to hear about it. None of us want to look back and know that we had an amazing opportunity in front of us, but we passed in favor of something meaningless instead.

Consider some of the resolutions Jonathan Edwards wrote in his early twenties to intensify his life for the glory of God.

- #5: "Resolved, never to lose one moment of time; but improve it the most profitable way I possibly can."
- #6: "Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live."
- #17: "Resolved, that I will live so, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die."
- #22: "Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can, with all the power, might, vigor, and vehemence, yea violence, I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert, in any way that can be thought of."

Edwards understood what we talked about last week – we are living in a completely new reality. *Colossians 1.12-13* explains that we have been brought into the Kingdom of God, and now we're learning what it means to live as citizen of God's Kingdom.

Because believers live in the new reality of God's Kingdom, we must live lives of influence.

What kind of influence are we to have?

1. We must live with the influence of salt. (*Matthew 5.13*)

A – What does this look like? (*Matthew 5.13a*)

Notice he says, "You are the salt of the earth." The verb is indicative (statement of fact), not imperative (a command to be something). Jesus is not urging his followers to become something they are not. He is telling them what they are as Kingdom people. They are to live out what God has made them.

Salt is a mark of God's covenant

- Salt was often used to bind a covenant (like a notarization).
- God commanded that sacrifices be accompanied with salt. *Leviticus 2.13*
- *Ezekiel 16.4* shows the Jewish practice of rubbing babies with salt.

- This salt of the covenant was a symbol of faithfulness. The fact that God commanded His people to include it probably means that he intended it to be a symbol of their response - a sign that the sacrifices were offered with hearts set on knowing and serving the Lord.
- This is what makes a Christian different – they respond to the covenant of grace with faithfulness and obedience.

Salt acts as a preservative

- Salt was used to keep things from going bad, to keep putrefaction at bay.
- The world apart from God is rotten because of sin, but through Jesus power we are able and obliged to have a preserving and purifying effect on it.
- The church has had two opposing errors that have dominated:
 - Believing that the world is basically good and becoming better – we become too much like the world. (Syncretism)
 - Because the world is rotten, Christians try to disassociate themselves and retreat. (Sectarianism) *John 17.15-18*
Dietrich Bonhoeffer said it strongly: "A flight into the invisible is a denial of the call. A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow Him."

Salt adds flavor and makes you thirsty

- The tragedy is that people don't associate Christianity with adding flavor and zest to life, but the exact opposite.
- *Oliver Holmes: "I might have entered the ministry if certain clergymen I knew had not looked and acted so much like undertakers."*
- *A.C. Swinburne: "Thou hast conquered, o pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath."*
- God intended for His people to live in such a way that others will be made more aware of their need for Christ.
- Do you make men thirsty for Christ?
- Jesus can satisfy the great thirst of the human soul.
- To many times we don't make people thirsty because we are not drinking from the pure living water of Christ.
- *"For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. Jeremiah 2.13*

B – What is the danger to avoid? (Matthew 5.13b)

- If Christians are not fulfilling their purpose as followers of Christ, then they are headed to disaster.
- Much of the salt in Palestine, such as that found on the shores of the Dead Sea, is contaminated with Gypsum and other materials that make it taste flat and even repulsive. When a batch of such contaminated salt would find its way into a household and be discovered, it was thrown out.

- People would be careful not to throw it on a garden or field, because it would kill whatever was planted. Instead it would be thrown onto a path or road, where it would gradually be ground into the dirt and disappear.
- Christians cannot lose their salvation, just as pure salt cannot lose its inherent saltiness. But Christians can lose their value and effectiveness in the Kingdom when sin and worldliness contaminate their lives, just as salt can become tasteless when contaminated by other minerals.
 - Instead of influencing men's taste it is trodden under their feet. The same thing is true of those of us who follow Christ – cease to be different, cease to be effective.
 - How slow we are to learn this lesson. At times we fall into the trap of being blackmailed by a world that says, "Unless I find you life attractive *on my own terms*, I will not respond to the message of the gospel.
 - Sometimes we share our faith in these terms: "You shouldn't think being a Christian takes away all your fun. I can enjoy all the same things you do. Being a Christian isn't a list of don'ts – it's really not that different." Most of this may be true, but why should the church be so concerned to tell the world that it is really not very different from the world? The church then becomes powerless and pointless.

2. We must live with the influence of light. (Matthew 5.14-15)

A – What does this look like? (Matthew 5.14-15)

Light is needed in darkness.

- The first clear implication of Christ's words is that the world is in darkness where spiritual things are concerned.
- The tragedy is that men actually prefer the darkness. That is, they prefer their own imperfect and sinful ways instead of the perfect and holy standards of Jesus Christ.

Light acts as a guide. (Matthew 5.14a)

- Few things are more important than to realize the extent of the darkness. The problem with living in the darkness is the ability it has on one's ability to see clearly. A person loses direction – they lose their bearings.
- City on a hill – light is a guide. Like driving with no street lights – a light is something that makes clear the way.

Light is meant to be seen. (Matthew 5.15)

- The houses in Palestine were very dark, with only one circular window perhaps not more than 18 inches across. The lamp was like a sauce boat filled with oil, with the wick floating in it. It was not s easy to rekindle a lamp in the days before matches and Zippos existed. Normally the lamp stood on a stand, but when people went out of the house, for safety's

sake, they took the lamp from its stand and put it under a basket of clay, so it might burn without risk until they came back.

B – What is the danger to avoid?

- The light is not self-produced, but a reflection of Christ's light within us.

3. We must live with influence towards God's glory. (Matthew 5.16)

- People are to see our good deeds!
- In Greek, there are two words for "good" –
 - Agathos: defines a thing as good in quality.
 - Kalos: not only good in quality, but also captivating, beautiful, and attractive.
- Our good deeds are to draw attention not to ourselves, but to God.
- *For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 2 Corinthians 4.6*
- We point the way to God... He fills and satisfies and repairs!