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Becoming a World Class Christian

A Dialogue Sermon

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Matthew 5:14, 16, & Mark 16:15

February 26th, 2006

Based on thoughts by Rick Warren

- Matthew 5:14, 16 “*You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before people, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*”
- Mark 16:15 “*Jesus said to His followers, ‘Go everywhere in the world, and proclaim the Good News to the whole creation.’*”

Introduction—Steve

Last week I shared from a passage in the Sermon on the Mount [Matthew 5:13-16] == the SALT and LIGHT metaphors.

- I spent a lot of time with “*You are the salt of the earth*”.
- Today we want to spend some time with the other portion, “*You are the light of the world*”.

The passage reads: “*You are the light of the world. . . Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*” [vv. 14, 16]

Both “salt” and “light” indicate that we as followers & disciples of Jesus have a certain amount of influence for God in the world.

The church has been situated in the world with a double role: as salt to arrest or at least hinder the process of moral & spiritual decay. . . and as light to dispel darkness.

The one is **negative**, as we saw last week; it’s the one that prevents decay. It’s the *social action* that we engage in to keep things from going down hill. But social action is not enough. Repairing houses and providing medical care and feeding hungry people is not enough. We must share Christ; we must give people the Great Physician, the Bread of Life.

That’s the function of light: it is **positive**; it illuminates the darkness in our souls—just as the great torch lit up the night at the Winter Olympics. We are no longer lost, for the way to eternal life is clearly lit. The WAY, of course, is Jesus. [“*I am the Way, the Truth, the Light*” says Jesus of himself in John 14:6.] The LIGHT—well, that’s you & me—shining light on Him who is the way. It means bringing Jesus to people and people to Jesus. That’s *evangelism*.

That’s what Jesus had in mind when he commissioned his followers in Mark 16:15 – “*Go everywhere in the world, and tell the Good News to everyone.*”

That's the Great Commission, and it is everyone's commission. You & I are going to be either *world-class Christians* or *worldly Christians*. There is a difference!

When Jesus told that small band of followers to “*go everywhere in the world, and tell the Good News to everyone*”, that must have seemed overwhelming to them. Really all they had to do was step out their door and there was the mission field. Today, with the ease of travel, the Internet and technology, the world has once again gotten smaller. With the world at our fingertips, we can virtually step out our door to the mission field—be it in our neighborhood or half-way around the globe. The only barrier to lighting the whole world with the light of Jesus Christ is **the way we think**. Becoming world-class, missionary-minded, Great Commission Christians is going to take some mental shifts, some changes in our attitudes & our thinking.

POINT 1: Shift from Self-Centered to Other-Centered Thinking—Matt

- The only barrier is the way we think. We've got to make some mental shifts.
- Stop thinking like children. Think like mature people. To become a world-class Christian we shift from Self-Centered to Other-Centered Thinking.
- First, shift from thinking that people go out and “do stuff for God.” The truth is, God is already active in the world today. So shift. Instead of sitting around thinking about what *you* can do for God, (See who you put first when you think like that?) realize that *God* is already at work in the world around you. When you have a love relationship with God, you begin to recognize God's activity in and around your life. When you spot something happening that only God can do, join God there.
- God hasn't told us to go away and do some work for Him. From Genesis to Revelation God has told us that He is already at work trying to bring a lost world to Himself. If we will adjust our lives to Him in a love relationship, God will show us where He is at work. When we see God, that's our invitation to get involved. And then, when we join Him there, God completes His work through us.
- There are some things only God can do. Only God draws people to himself. God causes people to seek after Him. Only God reveals spiritual truth. Only God convicts the world of guilt regarding sin.
- Start asking the Holy Spirit to help you think of the spiritual need of unbelievers whenever you talk with them. With practice, you can develop the habit of praying silent “breath prayers” for those you encounter. Say “Father, help me to understand what is keeping this person from knowing you.” See them with God's eyes, and then do whatever will bring them a step closer to knowing Christ. Ask probing questions and listen!!!
- Our faith, our whole relationship with God is NOT for our *personal* fulfillment. Imagine all of us on the lookout for one another, but for those not in the fold yet. Church, we were saved by Christ to serve, not just to sit. You were made for a mission. What a privilege to be used for God's purposes!

POINT 2: Shift from Local to Global Thinking—Ben

Acts 1:8 – “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem* [close to home], *and in all Judea* [our country] *and Samaria* [other cultures], *and to the ends of the earth* [other nations].”

He talked about how God has worked that out in his own life. It began with a mission trip to El Salvador to help in the aftermath of a terrible earthquake back in 2000. Ben said, “God used that trip to blow the door off my view of the world.”

Before going on to talk about how God has led him “to the ends of the earth”, he suggested two

areas of world impact we as a church might have right here in our own backyard (i.e.: sort of our “Judea and Samaria”):

1. The large population of Muslims in Detroit.
2. International students attending the University of Michigan. How they need fellowship and friendship. . .and the Gospel. How easy it would be for us to reach out to them, offering our homes and hospitality!

Ben then talked about his recent trip to Torino for the *Winter Olympics 2006*. All the world was gathered in one place for those few days. He, the Great Commission Church named *Christ the Refuge*, and two mission groups from the USA spent time witnessing and sharing Christ with people gathered in that great city. Two young Italian men, who live right there in Torino, prayed to receive Christ. Hopefully, they will become part of the young fledging church there.

Ben showed slides of the games. . .the flags from all the nations. . .the large engineering college (called *Polytechnico*) where he hopes to establish a ministry of outreach and evangelism. . .the building their church meets in (a half block from the famous building that appeared in all the TV promos of the games—called *Mole*, pronounced *mole-a*).

About 30 people are now attending, which includes a staff of eight. Their vision is to disciple young Italians (i.e.: by showing them how God relates to every aspect of their lives and equipping them in God’s Word), and raise up strong leadership to actually start another church somewhere in Italy within the next two years.

Europe is one of the most spiritually needy areas of the world today. There are millions of young people in the universities and cities of Europe who are totally unfamiliar with the Gospel of Christ. Less than 1% of the young adult population attends an evangelical church. Yet like young people everywhere else in the world, they are hungry for relationship and for relevant spirituality.

POINT 3: Shift From “Here And Now” To “Eternal” Thinking—Steve

It’s hard to maintain an eternal perspective. We get so caught up in the here-and-now, the day-to-day stuff of life. Most of what we focus our attention & energy on won’t really matter a year (or even a month) from now.

That’s why Paul said: “*Fix your eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal*” [II Corinthians 4:18].

Being involved in missions, in whatever form it takes—whether it’s praying, giving, going (perhaps on a short-term mission trip or being part of a work team or becoming a full-time missionary), whether it’s doing social action, church planting, or faith-sharing evangelism—it all has eternal significance and impact.

It’s like the movie a couple years back entitled “*Pay It Forward*”. That’s what we do when we support missions & missionaries. We are “*storing up treasures in heaven*”. Since you can’t take it with you, might as well send it on ahead by investing in people who are going there.

I would love to see 25-30% of our membership (= 125-150 people) doing some kind of mission project each year. Wouldn’t it be neat if our attendance went down every summer—not because people are on vacation or taking the summer off, but because they are out on a mission field somewhere serving.

Wouldn't it be great to see a number of career missionaries raised up right here from DUMC, so that we could become truly a "*sending church*"?

Because missions is so much on the heart & mind of God, it's time to get intentional and do whatever it takes to reach our community and our world for Christ.

We can all have a part in it. It's a matter of putting "eternal things" ahead of "temporal" things.

CONCLUSION: The Great Commission is Your Mission—Matt

- God doesn't want to use just some of his people; God wants to use all of his people. At the risk of sounding like the Blues Brothers, we really are *all* called to be on-mission for God.
- So what does that mean for you today? How can you, with your job, your gifts, your talents, and your time schedule make a difference? Listen – people say "You can't take it with you." But the Bible says you can send it on ahead by investing in people who are going there! "*Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.*" 1 Tim. 6:17-19. Those God has blessed will be storing up real treasure for themselves in heaven—it is the only safe investment for eternity! What a great venture of your time, talents, and treasures!
- Many Christians have missed God's plan for their lives because they've never even *asked* God if He wanted them to serve as a missionary somewhere. You could seriously pray and ask God what he wants from you in the years ahead. Untold thousands of missionaries are desperately needed at this critical point in history, when so many doors are opening wide like never before.
- There are over 6 billion people on earth, and Jesus wants ALL his lost children found. Jesus said "Go make disciples of all the world..." That Great Commission is your commission. Doing your part is the secret to living a life of significance.

I'm going to share with you some of our Mission Initiatives. If you've participated in one as I share the name, we want to commend you. Would you please stand?: Habitat for Humanity, Cropwalk, hurricane relief (current or past), Haiti, Redbird (to the Appalachians), SOS (Memphis), Alpha House, Cropwalk, Costa Rica, Christmas in April, Faith in Action/Dexter Family Services, preparing boxes for school supplies, medical supplies, or , Project Angel Tree/Compassion Child International.

Now, we want to literally pray for the 4 corners of the world.