

Commands of Jesus Series

Living as a Witness for Jesus

I want to begin this morning by thanking J.J. for preaching the past couple of weeks. He preached on Jesus' commands related to spiritual disciplines and prayer.

This morning, as we continue to exam the nearly 50 commands of Jesus, we're going to looking at the category of **Living as a Witness for Jesus**.

If you have your outline for the series you can see that I specifically highlighted 6 separate categories .

Let me just briefly mention the last 4 and then I want to spend the bulk of our time on #1 & #2.

#3 – Be Hospitable to the Uninvited: The command in this section of scripture is when Jesus tells the crowd **who** they should be inviting to their parties. This teaching came in the midst of the dinner party thrown by a prominent Pharisee on the Sabbath. And at the beginning of the dinner party Jesus heals a man suffering from **dropsy** (the modern day equivalent would be **edema** – which is an excessive amounts of bodily fluids in a person's body). This would have made this person unclean and so many assume that he must have been invited and planted front and center to see what Jesus would do with him. It says that **Jesus was being carefully watched**. And Jesus proceeds to heal the man. If you read through the whole account of this dinner party it seems that Jesus seizes upon every opportunity to pick a fight with these self-righteous Pharisees. And so at one point, Jesus likely looked around the table and it was probably all the same type of people that were gathered together. And he tells them who they ought to invite to their parties.

Luke 14:12-14 (NIV) *Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, **invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,** 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."*

Who do you know who others tend to stay away from? Jesus says, reach out to them. Make them feel welcomed and special and loved. Get out of your comfort zone and reach out to those individuals who could never repay you. And a good question to ask yourself would be – *"If I don't show them God's love and tell them about God, then who will?"*

#4 Rely on the Holy Spirit's Power: **(Luke 24:48-49)** Jesus told his disciples to stay put in Jerusalem until they had received the Holy Spirit from above. He knew that these were a bunch of scaredy cats when he was crucified. They all fled and hid in a room out of fear. Even brash and compulsive Peter had sworn that he'd never deny Jesus but a few hours later swore that he never knew him in order to save his own skin. However, once Peter was filled with the Spirit he was unstoppable. On the day of Pentecost he boldly stood up and proclaimed who Jesus was before some of the very individuals he was scared of when Jesus was arrested. And later Peter and John were hauled in front of the Jewish ruling council during which time they tried to intimidate them from telling others about Jesus. But they refused to back down and the Scripture says:

"When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13 NIV) But what they didn't and couldn't see was that they'd also been filled with the Holy Spirit.

You and I need this same Holy Spirit power to give us the courage and wisdom to share Christ with the people around us. The Holy Spirit knows what the person you're about to talk with has been through all of their life leading up to this encounter. So, the Holy Spirit knows what words would be most effective to reach them with the message of Jesus. Walk through life asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance and wisdom for each encounter God leads you into.

#5 Make Disciples: (Matthew 28:18-20) In one of Jesus' very last commands He gave was to make **disciples** everywhere you go. This is different than just **converts**.

- **Converts** could be convinced that Jesus who he says he is and they need to accept him to avoid spending eternity in Hell.
- A **disciple** is someone who wants to be just like Jesus in everything. In the way they live and think and act and react. I'll talk more about that in just a minute.

#6 Ask God to Raise Up Witnesses: (Matthew 9:38) Part of our prayers every day should be that God would raise up more and more people to be His witnesses to the world. It's what Jesus commanded us to do. Things haven't changed much from the 1st century when Jesus commanded this. There are still plenty of people who need to come to know Jesus and not nearly enough people willing to share Him. **I've added this to our weekly prayer list that we use on Wednesday nights.** When the **Barna research study group** released it's most recent results concerning evangelism in the digital age it found that nearly **1/3 of Christians believe that evangelism is the church's responsibility not theirs.** And as long as you make it the church's responsibility then you don't have to be "inconvenienced" by sharing your faith. But who makes up the church? You do. You're not paying me as your "hired gun" to do all your evangelism. And I'm certainly more than willing to meet with your friends and talk about Christ. But you're the one with a relationship with them and it's YOU that God has intentionally put into contact with. So, God's not expecting me but expecting you to reach out to them and share Christ. Pray daily that God would break your heart for those who don't know Jesus personally and that this would give you the passion and motivation to share your faith with those God has strategically put you in contact with.

Okay, that leave us with #1 & #2, which is where I want to spend some, extended time this morning.

#1 Shine Brightly: (Mt. 5:13-16)

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

*14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, **let your light shine** before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

The only command in this section is to *"let your light shine before others"*. And I think that's highly significant because of what else is not a command. Notice, Jesus doesn't command us to become salt and light. Jesus is assuming that as followers of his, as his disciples, we are by our core identity instantly salt and light. The only real question is what kind of salt and light are you going to be. From our previous point, 2/3 of Christians currently believe that it's the church's responsibility to be salt and light in the world. But that's certainly not Jesus' point here. In this passage Jesus isn't talking about the church being salt and light. The church hasn't even been established yet. He's talking about each individual member of his kingdom. How do I know that? Because He just finished describing the type of people who make up his kingdom. They were:

- *The poor in spirit*
- *Those who mourn*
- *The meek*
- *Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness*
- *The merciful*
- *The pure in heart*
- *The peacemakers*
- And the most immediate context is *those who are persecuted because of their relationship with Jesus.*

If you claim to be a follower of Jesus Christ, then you are under a microscope. The world is increasingly filled with people who are either nonbelievers or those who claim to not be into religion but claim to be spiritual. I'm sure you've heard that. And I'm pretty sure that Jesus would have easily claimed the same thing. During his ministry, Jesus seemed to be often against "organized religion" at least in the form it existed at the time. But Jesus was all about trying to connect people to a relationship with their Heavenly Father. And perhaps Jesus' greatest demonstration of being a light under persecution was when he was hanging on the cross for you and my sins and he asked his Heavenly Father to forgive his accusers. Jesus' actions of love and forgiveness and grace had to have caught a lot of people in the crowd by surprise that day. It certainly caught the attention one of the other men being crucified alongside Jesus. And today that man is in heaven with Jesus.

One of the greatest opportunities you have to shine brightly for Jesus is when you go through difficulties in your life. It could be direct persecution for your faith or it could be a personal tragedy or when someone hurts you. How do you respond? Do you get angry and exact your revenge or refuse to forgive. When we respond in that way who's being glorified?

When we're in those very difficult situations, often the core of who we are shows up. What I mean is that you can get up and take a shower and put on your nice clothes and come to church and look really nice. But what happens when you leave these doors and go out into your world and someone betrays you or you get a devastating medical diagnoses or people around you are constantly letting you down or hurting those you love so deeply. How do you respond then? And as I say that, I can look around the room and identify many of you who have either been through those sort of life altering situations or are currently living in them. How did you respond, how are you responding now? In Jesus' culture, and to some extent ours as well – salt was used as a preservative with meat and light dispelled darkness. That's God's goal for us as salt and light today as well. God wants to use you to help preserve people from living lives of eternal decay and to show them the light of Jesus in order to dispel the darkness in their lives. And we don't have to get the salt and light from somewhere outside of us. As followers of Jesus you already have the salt and light living inside of you in the form of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. And Jesus said that one of the main goals of the Holy Spirit was to exalt Jesus. So, the Holy Spirit is always trying to magnify and glorify Jesus in each of our hearts and minds. On Friday I went to pick up Connie from work and I had some extra time in the car and I opened my Bible to 1 Peter and began to read these powerful words.

1 Peter 1:3-9 (NIV) *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, 5 who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. 6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. 8 Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.*

I was going through a personally discouraging time and as I read these words tears came to my eyes and joy filled my heart as the Holy Spirit ministered to me by pointing my heart and mind to Jesus. And that's what the Holy Spirit wants to do daily in each of our lives. To redirect us to the goodness and the greatness and the glory of Jesus. The Holy Spirit wants to continually remind you of what Jesus has done for you and your new identity in Him and remind you of your future with Him and how He wants to use you to change the world you live in. And as Jesus becomes your greatest treasure and delight then when tragedy of persecution comes you are brought right back to the goodness of God and His love for you. And while your problems may not instantly go away, your renewed focus on Jesus gives you greater hope and joy in the midst of your personal problems.

And notice, in our original text what the result of you letting Jesus' light shine through you. People see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Others become worshippers of God because of the difference they've seen God make in your light and how that has transformed your life. They

begin to see that and it creates a desire within them to have what you have. It's what drew people to Jesus and how God wants to draw other to Himself through you.

So the way you become an effective light shiner is not to learn evangelism techniques (although that's not a bad idea) but to continue to focus more on more on who Jesus is. Let Him become your greatest treasure and your firm foundation. So that when the storms of life come into your life, people see you not living in despair or bitterness and unforgiveness but they see the transformative power of Jesus shining brightly through you.

#2 Brag on God: (Mark 5:19)

Mark 5:18-20 (NIV) *As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. 19 Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." 20 So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.*

This is the story of a man Jesus encountered who was filled a bunch of demons. He was living in remote caves apparently naked and insane. In the past people had tried to control him by putting very heavy chains on him but through the demons supernatural power he busted everyone of them. So, they gave up and just resorted to him being this way for the rest of his life. But Jesus set him free from his personal torment. Imagine the powerful testimony this man had when he suddenly showed up in his neighborhood and began to tell them how Jesus had set him free.

Jesus tells him to tell others two things:

1. How much the Lord has done for you
2. How the Lord has had mercy on you.

The two are intertwined. But let me briefly explain the two by starting with the second. Grace is what God has given you that you didn't deserve. Mercy is God withholding what you deserved. This man hadn't "earned" the right for Jesus to set him free. And you haven't "earned" the right for Christ to come and pay the penalty for your sins on the cross. According to the Bible each of us actually "earned" eternal death and separation from God because of our many sins.

Ephesians 2:3-5 (NIV) *Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.*

That right there ought to give you plenty to boast about. You and I were doomed to a life of separation from God until Jesus died for us on the cross.

But then there's also #1 - How much the Lord has done for you. We began our worship service this morning by hearing some of these testimonies. And every one of us ought to have a notebook filled with these. I want to share a brief testimony about God's goodness recently. **Linda Trummer** Right after this service you're all invited to a delicious chili luncheon downstairs. And I'd encourage you to share with someone at your table an example of what the Lord has done for you recently. It's tremendously encouraging to hear other people's testimonies about God's working in their lives. It's a pretty safe environment to share your testimony. And then follow Jesus' commands to this man. Go home and share with others. Share with neighbors, co-workers, friends etc. And I'd encourage you to get a notebook and begin writing down examples of what the Lord has done for you. That way you're building up a reservoir or examples to encourage you when you're discouraged and to share with others. Writing them and rereading them will be a tremendous boost to your faith.

I want to close our worship time by standing and reading together a commitment to tell about the goodness of God. Full disclosure - I've changed to of the words to personalize it for each of us.

Isaiah 63:7 (NIV)

*I will tell of the kindnesses of the Lord,
the deeds for which he is to be praised,
according to all the Lord has done for ME—
yes, the many good things he has done for ME,
according to his compassion and many kindnesses.*

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#3 – Be _____ to the Uninvited:

- Who do you know who others tend to stay away from?
- How can you show God's love to them in a practical way?

#4 Rely on the Holy Spirit's _____:

- How have you seen the Spirit's power in your life?

#5 Make _____:

- What's the difference between a convert & a disciple?

#6 Ask God to Raise Up _____:

- This includes YOU!!
- Who did you last share Christ with?

#1 Shine _____:

- You are already salt and light.
- What's your typical default response when things are tough?
- Who shines brightest in your life – you or Jesus?
- Name someone who've you've seen shine brightly for Jesus in the midst of difficulty, What did that look like?

#2 _____ on God:

- How has God shone you mercy?
- List 5 things the Lord has done for you recently:
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.

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