

Life Group Notes
Sunday 18 March 2018

Speaker: Josh Betts
Title: How Not to Live a Double Life

Of the 168 hours in your week, only 3 of them are spent at a church meeting on a Sunday. What do you do with the other 165, minus the approx. 55 hours you are asleep? Through Matthew's account of Jesus' life and teaching we can find instruction and challenge from the mouth of Jesus on how we should consider our lives beyond our organised church meetings. We looked at three pictures that demonstrate that Jesus wants all of our 168 hours each week to be lived for him:

Picture 1 – Salt & Light (Matthew 5:13-16). If a member or leader of Reading Family Church, your spiritual brothers and sisters, got a job at your workplace, how would that make you feel? What report of you would your colleagues give to them? Jesus declares that his disciples to be the 'salt of the earth' and 'light of the world'. What does this say about who we are, and are to be?: That we are what makes the world 'taste' better, to enhance and perfect it; that we are valuable and precious commodities, God's Plan A to save the world; That there is no division between the 'church' and 'the world'; and that it isn't possible to salt if you aren't adding flavour, or be light if you are hiding the brightness. This is a challenging statement for us – Jesus isn't being 'twee' or sweet here. If we aren't bringing flavour or light in every area of our lives, especially our workplaces, then we are, frankly, of no use! We have this wonderful and empowering commission to be Jesus' 'Salt of the earth' and 'light of the world', but often our faith can be anonymous in our work – we can go extended periods of time with no indication that our lives have been radically transformed by Jesus. A kind of 'double-life' is easily lived. How can we start afresh to be 'Salt' and 'Light', for Jesus wants ALL of our life to add flavour and give light to others?

Picture 2 - Build upon the Rock (Matt 7:24-27). Jesus uses a picture of contrasting building projects to illustrate the different responses to his teaching. He says that the wise person listens and acts upon his teaching – building upon a solid foundation that cannot be shaken. In the chapters in between the 'salt & light' picture, and this one, Jesus gives 17 short lessons on how we are to be the tasty salt and shining, darkness-dispelling light. And these lessons are radical - doing them will make us stand out. We can often disregard Jesus' teaching on how we should live because we don't believe he really meant us to, that their only purpose was to show us how much we need his grace. But Jesus is clear in this passage that we should actually do the things he teaches. Note that not only is this a case of 'obedience' to Jesus' commands, but also proves to be of great benefit to us – when storms hit our lives, they do not fall apart. If we live Jesus' ways, we can be sure that, somehow, difficult life moments will not derail us. And this should be appealing to us – and will be a way that we shine as light to the world.

Often we think about 'sin' as merely 'breaking rules'. This is reflected in how, though we truly believe in our minds, our lifestyles are not affected. For Jesus, being 'saved' was inextricably linked to how you lived your life. If we see sin as more than just 'breaking rules' – as how we have misused God's good creation – then it matters how we then live our lives in our new narrative – the Kingdom of God. We now use His creation as it was created to be used (wine, the environment, friendships, marriage, sex, work, social media, leisure). Often religion has sought to restrict enjoyment of God's creation – but in the Kingdom of God we should enjoy God's creation under his authority and how he intended us to do so. And this lifestyle of being his 'apprentice' or 'student' will be a 'Light to the world' – and they will want to know more about our God and "give him glory".

Picture 3: The Pearl and the Hidden Treasure (Matt 13:44-45). It's easy to think that we can just 'add' Jesus to our life, but in actual fact there is a cost. In this picture a man 'joyfully' trades all his possessions for a treasure he found. This should be our experience also when we are invited into the Kingdom of God – we won't want to build on the rock unless we truly see the life Jesus offers as being superior to the one we had before. Dallas Willard: "if I am not immersed in the reality of this kingdom of love, it will not seem good or right to me to forego reputation, pride, vanity, and wealth, and I will inescapably be driven to pursue them".

Jesus honours us by using us to be salt and light to Reading, to our friends, families and workplaces. He tells us that the wise person DOES what he teaches – and that living out his way is how we are salt and light. Jesus tells us that the life in his Kingdom is a treasure worth trading our old lives, our old way of doing things, for. Unless we believe this to be true, it will be impossible to live as 'Salt' and 'Light' in the world.

Suggested Questions:

1. Which Picture speaks to you most clearly or powerfully? What does it teach you about your life?
2. To what extent do you see Jesus' teaching on how you live your life to be 'restrictive'? Or, to what extent do you believe that your life will be happier and more enjoyable by 'building your house on the rock'?
3. What stories can you share of when you have been 'salt' and 'light' in your workplace? What ways could you start to be 'Salt' and 'Light'? This might be praying for a colleague, but also showing compassion, simply forgiving others/not passing judgement, or speaking up for the oppressed or against bullying;
4. Are there any 'bits of broken glass' in your life that you need to confess to God, ask for help, dwell in truth, and decisively move on from? Skim through Matthew Chapters 5, 6 and 7 for prompts;