**Calvary Fellowship 4.10.2022 Matthew 5:13-20 “Dotting the i’s and Crossing the t’s”**

* **So a couple of years ago I took some piano lessons - I’ve been playing guitar for 30 years, but learning a new instrument is a different experience**
* It’s strange to walk up to an instrument & stink at it - I’ve gotten fairly good on guitar over the years, so w/in reason I can learn & play almost any song
* But piano has been a challenge b/c I’m trying to get both of my hands to play something different - but my piano teach let me pick any song I wanted to learn
* So I picked a song called “The Scientist” by Coldplay - it’s a beautiful song off their 2nd album, it’s a little bit of a sad song, but I love it
* Here’s the thing - when you’re learning a song, U play it over & over & over again until U get it to sound somewhat decent
* So I close the door to my office & I play the song for a good hour & when I come out, my wife is on the verge of tears
* I say, “What’s wrong? Was my playing that bad?” - she says, “No. Your playing is fine. It’s that dumb song. It’s so sad. Now I’m depressed & want to cry.”
* Have U ever had that moment? Where you’re feeling fine & then this song just moves U - and it doesn’t matter where the song plays, it hits U
* I have several song like that - “Your Song” by Elton John is a song like that for me - I’ve been in the middle of Publix & started to cry b/c they’re playing it
* A few years ago, I took Mia w/ me to a Billy Joel concert - I love Billy Joel & he played all the hits like Piano Man & Scenes from an Italian restaurant
* But out of nowhere Billy starts playing "Your Song" by Elton John & I’m trying to hod it in - U ever try to hold in a cry that is fighting for its life to come out?
* Here's the thing - that's the song I used to sing to Mia as a baby when she was falling asleep - I turn into a blubbering mess in the middle of 20,000 people
* Mia looks at me & taps me on the shoulder says, “Dad, can I ask a question?”
* I said, “Yes, of course.” - She says, “Why don’t we eat at Subway anymore.”
* I said, “I don’t know. What made U think of Subway?” - She says, “I’ve been seeing a lot of signs for Subway & we don’t go there anymore.”
* I am crying about the love of a father for his daughter & she’s wondering why we haven’t picked up a spicy Italian on Wheat lately
* **But this is the power of an unseen, influential force in our lives**
* Songs can do it - Don’t believe me? Watch what happens when Eye of the Tiger comes on at a gym - men somehow can lift 30% more than before
* This is the power of influence - influence has the ability to do what laws, force, intimidation, & power can’t do - influence makes us want to change
* This is the hope that Jesus has for His disciples as they walk in this world
* His goal is that we will be an influential force in this world & cause change that transforms culture globally & impacts the lives of people individually
* Jesus began His sermon by talking 8 counterintuitive ways to be happy
* But that secret to happiness isn’t just for us - it’s for us to live a life that’s so different than the world around us that it causes others to want to know God
* B/c here’s what I know - U want to impact your family, friends, & community
* But here’s what I want U to know - that people’s views of God are being formed by how we use our influence & how we act in our daily actions
* This is why when U talk to people about your faith, sometimes they will have an objection - they’ll say, “I met a Christian who wasn’t very Christian.”
* How d o U respond to that? I usually say, “That’s unfortunate, but just walking into a McDonald’s doesn’t make U a Big Mac.”
* **So Jesus is going to talk about 3 ways that Christians can have incredible influence & be tools in the hand of God to see people’s lives change**
* So if you’re here & you’re praying for someone who is far from God or U want to see someone U know come to know Jesus & turn their lives around
* Then listen in b/c we’re going to talk practically about the role Jesus wants U play in seeing those we love changed by the power of God…

**———(v. 13)———**

**#1 - I am Called to be a Preserving Force in the World**

* **The way we think about salt & the way Jesus’ original hearers thought of salt are very different - salt in that day was a staple item in many ways…**
* **#1 - Salt was a Preservative -** this is how people in the ancient world kept meat fresh before refrigeration - they would pack it w/ salt - like beef jerky
* **#2 - Salt was a Medicinal Tool** - it was used as healing agent to clean wounds
* **#3 - Salt was Currency -** Many people were paid in salt/ debts could be repaid w/ it - In fact, the phrase salary comes from an ancient word = “salt money”
* That’s were the phrase, “He’s not worth his salt” comes from
* In our culture, salt is used for flavor or to clear roads after it snows
* **So I love popcorn - now when I say I love popcorn, I’m talking about a love that is almost at the level of unnatural - Smartfood in particular**
* So last Sunday after we got home from church, Carey & I decided to watch a TV show & I said I was going to grab some popcorn
* I usually measure it out into a ziplock bag, but instead I just grabbed the 1/2 filled bag of popcorn & said, “I’ve self-regulate how much popcorn I eat.”
* And I did - once the bag was completely empty, I stopped eating
* But here’s what I didn’t think about - how thirsty I was going to get after eating that much popcorn - I’m guzzling water & using chapstick b/c my lips were dry
* **U see, salt creates thirst - that’s what a Christian should be doing**
* Creating thirst whenever they walk into a situation so people are thirsty for God
* “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.” (John 7:37-38)
* If we are salt, that means we preserve, we heal, & we are committed to leading people to the 1 who can satisfy their thirst
* When your friend has trouble in their marriage, our marriages should be such that people are drawn us - why? B/c our marriages have flourished
* B/c our words & our counsel are like a healing balm in someone’s life
* “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” (Colossians 4:6)
* B/c salt can’t lose it’s flavor or it ceases to be salt - that’s the point
* Jesus is calling His followers to live the way they were created to live
* My mom taught me this trick when I was a kid that I’ve still used to this day when I make Cafe con leche - that’s basically a Cuban version of a latte
* She said if I put a touch of salt in it, it will bring out the sweetness
* I don’t know if there’s a better description of how Christians should operate in this world - we live like salt & everyone’s life gets better…

**———(v. 14-16)———**

**#2 - I am Called to be a Reflection of My Savior**

* **We live w/ all kinds of light - in this culture, when they thought of light, they are thinking of fire**
* When they thought of God as being light – they saw Him as a consuming fire
* “For the Lord your God is a consuming fire.” (Deuteronomy 4:24)
* There was a danger to fire that everyone in that day respected & understood
* **I never thought of fire as dangerous until the 1st July 4th part Carey & I had after we got married - so this is about 21 years ago**
* We invited a bunch of people came over to our house for a bbq
* We had this grill that was given to us & I had never owned a grill before
* By parents only cooked on a grill once a year on July 4th - in fact, I only thought companies made hot dog & burger buns on that holiday b/c we never hot bog buns or burger buns throughout the year
* Then I stayed over Frank Mullin’s house when I was in the 8th grade & his mom served hot dogs for dinner & they were on hot dog buns
* So I asked where they got the hot dog buns so many months after July 4th
* After I got this weird look from his parents & my friend explained to me the truth, I learned - I didn’t know what to say, so I just said, “I’m sorry. I’m Cuban.”
* Well, the grill the that I was given was a gas grill & I didn’t know how to work it, so I bought charcoal - the ready light kind - those that have lighter fluid on them
* I also bought a bottle of lighter fluid I didn’t know that, so I dumped an entire bottle of fluid on them
* So when I put the match over it to throw it on - the flame came up & burned all the hair on my arm off! Everything I cooked smelled like hair - it was nasty
* Think about what fire is supposed to do - it’s supposed to warm, it’s supposed to nourish (when U use it to cook), & it’s supposed to light the way
* This is exactly what Jesus is saying - if we don’t, then we end up being like my grill, scorching everyone who gets close to it
* **Listen - let me tell U what I see happening that’s turning so many people off from Jesus - people love being right more than they love people**
* Listen - people who were nothing like Jesus liked Jesus
* And it’s not that Jesus didn’t tell them the hard truths - it’s that He didn’t beat them over the head w/ it & then gloat about it
* Listen, Christians can be some of the most mean-spirited people in the world
* And it’s b/c we love to be right more than we love people - & that has to change
* B/c when you’re a light - when U warm people’s lives & illuminate people’s lives, U are making everyone’s life better & that draws people to U
* Think about it - have U ever turned on a light & gotten blasted w/ so much light that it blinded U? Sure - that’s why dimmers were such great inventions
* B/c a dimmer will let U get to the same place - full illumination, but it takes into account where the person currently is
* This is why the objection to this that some will have is, “Well, I live my life full blast for Jesus.” - no - You’re really living full blast for yourself
* B/c Jesus always took into account where people were starting from when He spoke to them - He always shared light, but never wiped them out w/ light
* That’s what a wise person does - if a person is in total darkness, let’s use the dimmer switch wisely & steadily & gradually give more & more light
* And when U do - the result is always good & people’s lives change
* When U just go full blast, U feel good about yourself but no one’s life is transformed & U just chalk it up to it being their fault
* That’ why Jesus challenges us to let our light shine so that people see our good works & they glorify God - That’s how we know we’re doing it right
* When people glorify God b/c of our lives, that’s when we’re lighting correctly
* That’s why I love how Jesus says it - live in such a way that people see your good works - the Greek word is Kalos - it means beautiful
* There’s a beauty in the way we live that glorifies God
* **My wife had a doctor’s appointment this week & as the doctor was going over the results, I put my arm around my wife & held her hand**
* And the doctor stops & says, “Wow. What U 2 have is really very special.”
* And we talked about celebrating 25 years of marriage the year & Jesus gets U through tough times & the doctor starts talking about his journey spiritually
* He tells us that he really admires Jesus & wants to be like Jesus
* This guy was basically preaching the Gospel to himself & all I did was hold my wife’s hand - it’s the easiest sermon I’ve ever given
* I thought, “I’m going to receive an offering & then the service is over.”
* But here’s what it was - it’s when U live your life beautifully - when U honor God & trust Him even in challenging times - sometimes, that preaches more than a sermon ever could - b/c a beautiful life is what everyone is seeking
* And there is something so wildly attractive about people who are really living for Jesus & really loving people - it’s like a magnet - it draws everyone in

**———(v. 17-20)———**

**#3 - I am Called to be Authentic in My Life**

* **Understand who Jesus was telling these people they needed to be more righteous than - the Scribes & Pharisees - who are they?**
* The Pharisees were the strictest religious group in Israel - in fact, there were only 6,000 Pharisees, so they were an honored group
* **To be become a Pharisee, U had to take a solemn oath to obey the 10 commandments & keep all 613 OT laws**
* They made sure they kept every detail by following another book called the Mishna - the Mishna was the oral law
* The Oral Law were all of the laws God told Moses, but Moses didn’t write down
* So how did they make sure to keep the Oral Laws? By adhering to another book called The Talmud, which are all of the interpretations given by the rabbis
* **So here’s how it works: The Torah says to rest on the Sabbath**
* But what does it mean to rest? What can U do or not do?
* The Mishna lists 39 activities U cannot be involved in on the Sabbath
* 1 of them is lifting heavy things - but, some might ask, “What constitutes lifting a heavy thing?” - The Talmud can help w/ that
* The Rabbis argued & debated & it records that lifting someone heavy constitutes carrying anything heavier than 2 figs
* The Talmud says a person couldn’t look in the mirror on the Sabbath b/c if U saw a gray hair U may want to pluck it out & that would be a Sabbath violation
* They decided a person could walk 3/4 of a mile b/c 1 step after that & you’d break a sweat - resting became more work than actually working
* **So I preached at a church a few years ago & the Pastor was telling me a story about the really nice Jewish family that lives next door to him**
* B/c they’re orthodox Jews, they have a stove that turns on & off so they don’t have to push the buttons b/c that would be a Sabbath violation
* Well, 1 Saturday the pastor hears yelling & someone is banging on his door
* He comes out & the dad of the family next door says, “Pastor, I need U to do inside & turn my stove b/c it didn’t turn off by itself!”
* My friend said to them, “Hey, so pressing the button was a Sabbath violation, but running to my house & banging on the door wasn’t?”
* The neighbor says, “Listen man, are U going to help me or not?” - so he did
* **Here’s the point - Sabbath was about resting & knowing that you’re loved apart from what U do, but through all their laws, they had turned into work**
* And somehow they missed the blessing it was supposed to be & turned into a into a show about how good I am
* Jesus saying that U have to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes & Pharisees was a seemingly impossible order
* The Jews had a saying at that time, “If only 2 people make it into heaven, 1 will be a Scribe and the other a Pharisee.”
* The Scribes were those who made handwritten copies of the law of God
* They’re also called Lawyers in the other Gospels b/c they were the copiers of the Bible, which made them the experts on the Bible
* These were the experts in the Bible - those who are seen as the holiest people, but they had created all of this workarounds to get out of doing what it said
* **This is at the heart of what Jesus is saying - as Christians, we do this too sometimes w/o even realizing it**
* We say things like, “Well, the Bible doesn’t talk about it specifically, so I’m ok.”
* So while you’re right the Bible doesn’t say anything about a flight from FLL to Nashville, it does speak a lot of wisdom about how we live & what’s appropriate
* And the reason we do this is b/c we think that we can dance on the line as live as close to sin as possible & still be ok
* I have watched lives, marriages, ministries, & reputations be destroyed b/c people who should have known better danced on the line & weren’t wise
* And all the while they are saying, “Well, it’s not technically wrong or immoral.”
* And it wasn’t immoral - it was just unwise & they tried to find workarounds & tried to justify what they were doing
* And there’s what Jesus is saying - not 1 jot or tittle is going to pass away from the law - Those are Hebrew markings, like crossing T’s & dotting I’s
* None of it in going to be nullified until everything is fulfilled
* **U see, here’s what Jesus is getting at - U have to decide if what your authority is going to be - is it what God has said or what U think?**
* That’s why verse 19 is so important - if U break (annul) the commands of God & teach & encourage others to do the same - you’ll be small in the kingdom
* That words means insignificant - think about the things that you’d hate to be insignificant - your marriage, your family, your career, your purpose
* And here’s the challenge that Jesus is giving - if U set aside God’s Word about these areas & any other area of life, those things are going to be a shell of what they could have been
* If U don’t believe me, talk to someone who decided to marry someone who isn’t a Christian - they aren’t going to tell U a story of great blessing
* Instead, you’re going to hear a story I’ve heard 1,000’s of times & it always ends the same
* “We got along so well & he was open to me going to church. Then we got married & he thought the Jesus thing was a phase. Now we’ve got big trouble.”
* Listen, the sad story is the thing they was so important in their lives is stunted & insignificant in comparison to what it could have been b/c they didn’t think that command applied to them - And why is that?
* B/c we didn’t take the commands of God seriously down to the crossing of the t’s and the doting of the I’s
* But here’s good news - Jesus says when U decide that the Bible’s commands are there for your blessing - you will be great in the kingdom
* The things in the your life that matter most will go to places U never dreamed b/c the blessing of God is going to be on your life
* And that is God’s desire for U - that U walk w/ Him so He can bless your life & do things in your life that U & I could never do for ourselves
* And there’s story after story of that in the lives of Christians who decided to trust God down to the dotting of the I’s & the crossing of the t’s…