

ADDING VALUE TO THE WORLD

Ps. Waweru Njenga – 29 January 2017

Stand Out Series

Sermon Notes

Text: Matthew 5:1-16



If you are joining us for the first time today, we are so glad that you were able to be here for our family service today! Welcome to our church family - we love to host and we are glad to have you here today. We've been going through a series called 'Stand Out' because our conviction is that this year, God's desire is for His people to stand out/be distinguished; in our **faith**, in the way we **relate with our families**, in the way we **run our businesses and careers**, indeed in **every aspect** of our lives. So far we've learnt that Jesus never intended his followers to be Christians (that word only occurs 3 times in the bible, and only as a derogatory term used by others). Instead he intended for them to be disciples – which really means **someone who is 100% committed to living a life of radical obedience to this Jesus**. And we've learnt that two of the ways that Jesus' followers were meant to stand out or be distinguished is #1 by our radical love for one another, #2 by our embracing accountability and #3 by helping people find their way back to God. These are all things we want to excel in this year. If you missed any of those messages, you can listen to them online on our website.

QOD: Who do you consider to be the person that's had the most impact on the world?

Steve jobs/Martin Luther King/Alfred Einstein/Nelson Mandela/

Inauguration speeches are important. They set the tone for what a country can expect from its new leader. Take Donald John Trump for example. In his inaugural address, he stressed that power was now with the people and that he would unite America...and "make America great again". He gave notice to the political establishment saying, "we will no longer accept politicians who are all talk and no action -- constantly complaining but never doing anything about it". How good it would be to see this happen not only in the USA but also here in Uganda. The only downside is that he seemed to have borrowed lines from movie characters for sections of his speech!

Eight years before him, President Barrack Hussein Obama, in his first inauguration speech captured the imagination of the US and the world with his slogan 'Yes We Can' and the promise of change we could believe in. Coming closer to home, President John Pombe Magufuli of Tanzania in his inauguration speech, gave notice to those who waste government resources. His would be a government of frugality, development, results and fighting corruption.

Just the other day, I saw the president's speech on being a servant. He was quite clear he is no one's servant. I'm not sure if it's a matter of semantics but it was quite interesting to hear him say he is not hired by anyone to be anyone's servant! He came to deliver the country and that's it!

But did you know that Jesus too had the equivalent of an inauguration speech? Early in His ministry, he took the opportunity to tell those who followed Him what He, and therefore they would Stand Out for. Many who listened to his speech that day were wondering whether this was the leader who would finally set them free. You see the Jews at the time were living in very difficult circumstances. They were oppressed by the Roman government, which even though it had undertaken massive impressive infrastructure projects opening up the region, most of the people still struggled to make a living. It was a very unequal society: the top 2% of the

population controlled most of the wealth, the small middle class were whiners but generally compliant while the majority of the population was poor barely making ends meet. The government exacted heavy taxes but was not providing services to the people. Police brutality was rampant, with very violent methods used to suppress any protests or dissent. Women had few rights and children had zero rights. Corruption was rife in government offices and even with the religious leaders. Illness was a death sentence. Does that sound familiar? Majority of us look to see who the leader will be and if he/she is going to rescue us from all this mess that is happening in our country. The people who came to Jesus were no different; reeling from the weight of these issues and they came to Him for hope. And to them Jesus gave this inauguration speech that defined how His kingdom would run. And this speech is famously known as, "The Sermon on the Mount". And today I want us to look at the first part of it. READ **Matthew 5:1-16**

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them. He said: ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted".

I can see myself sitting there on the mountainside and I am thinking, "Ok Jesus move beyond the spiritual let's get to how we overthrow the Romans." Then He says: ⁵ *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

At that point I would sit up. Meek? Does he know that the definition of meek is "quiet, gentle, and easily imposed on; submissive"? Have you seen what the tax collectors do to meek people? Let us not even talk about the Romans! Where I come from, the meek do not inherit anything. They are the losers the doormats everyone steps on. Jesus I prefer what you had said earlier, "The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and the violent take it by force". Show us how to advance the kingdom leave this talk of meekness. Jesus went on

⁶ *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

Peacemakers? Jesus you have got to be kidding me! How can you ask us to make peace with this oppressive, corrupt government? We want these thieves out! Have you encountered the corruption cartels of this nation? Do you see how they chew and spit out the peaceful with total impunity? But Jesus isn't listening to me...

¹⁰ *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Time out Jesus, we are not going anywhere with this speech of yours. Who is your speechwriter? Blessed when we are persecuted? Those two words can't even go in the same sentence. How can I be persecuted and blessed at the same time? Are you blind to what these Romans are doing to us? Are you saying that my losing my job for doing what it right, losing the deal because I refuse to bribe is a blessing? By the way, it's not hard to see why many complained Jesus' teaching was difficult and left him. This is not what people like to hear! It's easier to talk about 'just tithe and everything will be okay'.

Now I think Jesus saw the glazed 'you got to be kidding me look' on these people's faces. They were not grasping what He was teaching. So He did what any great communicator would do, He gave them an analogy, an image.

¹³ "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.

Jesus used 2 things that were so central to Jewish life that I have to explain them to you because we don't have the same value for them today. The first is salt. In those days, salt was an extremely precious and valuable commodity. Powerful nations restricted its production and the Roman government used it to pay soldiers their salaries. Actually the word 'salary' comes from the Latin word for salt, 'sal'. If you've heard the saying, 'this person is worth their salt', it basically means they are worth everything they are being paid!

Why was salt so valuable? Firstly it was a **preservative**. You see in those days before LG and Samsung existed, there were no fridges. The only way to keep meat fresh was to rub salt into the meat as a preservative. Without salt, your food would rot because you couldn't preserve it. Not only was it a preservative, but it was also a **seasoning**. Salt is used to add taste or flavor to food. And lastly, salt was a **disinfectant**. Anybody here ever had an adult put salt in your wound when you injured yourself? Or anybody here ever gargle salt water when you had a sore throat? That's because all these years later, salt is still one of the most available disinfectants

Please note that Jesus didn't say, "please be the salt", or "You should be salt," or "It would be nice for you to be salt." No, if you are truly my disciples, then by that very definition you are the salt of the earth. In other words, you and I, if we truly claim to be followers of Jesus, we don't become salt when we're ready or when we feel like. You **are** the preservative, of the entire earth. If you don't do your work, then the earth decays, there is decomposition, our culture becomes rotten, tasteless and sick! And guess what? You've no one to blame when that happens except yourselves. Salt never blames food for being tasteless!

But Jesus didn't stop there, he said, 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." In those days, they built the towns on hills for protection. And so when it was dark and people in the towns lit their oil lamps, you could see them from far, far away. Jesus was saying that just as a town on a hill was strategically placed, so are we. You were not born in the family you belong to as a mistake! God strategically placed you there. You do not work where you work or live where you live as a coincidence! God strategically placed you there. And He placed you there so that you can represent Him.

In other words, Jesus is saying that, I want you to live your life in such a way that when people look at you, they don't just say, 'my brother is a good person', 'or my co-worker is a good Christian', but instead that when they look at you, they are so struck by your actions that they become attracted to me! I want them to see your love for one another and say 'who does that?' I want them to see how accountable you are to each other and say, 'that's crazy!' I want them to see how you share your life with others and say, 'why do you do that?' I want them to see how you love the poor and say, 'surely there must be a God'.

I believe that Jesus' desire is that just like in the first century AD, we, his modern day disciples, are to be lamps that bring light to a world that is groping and lost in darkness. People looking for true solutions, needing true life but blind to where to find it. Inoculating themselves with drugs, with money, with sex, with gambling and fame. We are the light and for too long we have stayed under the table. Jesus says we cannot hide, that is not our mandate. We cannot go into the workplace and do everything to remain hidden. Like salt and light, we

must add value to our world. And this is the fourth quality that will distinguish us as Jesus' disciples. We must **stand out by adding value to the world**.

As Ugandans, we often huddle together and discuss – eh complain - how our country is rotten to the core. We tweet about how our morals have gone to the dogs. We share videos on Whatsapp about how horrible things are. We're the country that pays MPs astronomical amounts but don't want to pay our doctors and our teachers. We're the country where it's not just students who cheat in exams; parents and teachers are the ones who provide leaked papers! We're the country where tribalism is no longer driven by the older generation who grew up in the village; it's now driven by intellectuals on social media. We're the country where you can hardly get a government service without being asked to 'buy soda. We're the country where our high schoolers now aspire to be 'socialites with a sponsor'. We're the country that still has people in danger of starvation every time there's a drought, 50 years after independence.

Our country doesn't need your complaining, it needs your solutions! Disciples are to preserve this rotting world by adding value where everyone is complaining. They are to bring light to this dark world by sharing hope, when everyone else is only pointing fingers. They are to disinfect this sick world by lovingly engaging where no one else will and cleaning up the places where God has placed them through their engagement, prayer and action. We must **stand out by adding value to the world**. I'd like to introduce a group that is doing exactly that

¹⁶ *In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.* Mavuno church, you are not standing out this year so that you can point people back to yourself. It's not so that people can say, "Boy can he fast and pray" or "Mein, that lady can really speak in tongues" or "Wow, he knows all God's nicknames, Jehovah Nissi, Jehovah Rapha, Jehovah Elohim." The reason God wants you to stand out this year is because He wants that when people see you, they give credit to Him. Whether you're a student in college, whether you work in a company as a casual laborer, as a secretary, as a manager, as a CEO; whether you are a teacher or a doctor or a civil service employee, whether you own a successful business or are just starting off your *business*, He wants your light, your deeds, your lifestyle to stand out and to shine so bright that people begin to connect your deeds to the fact that you are a follower of Jesus. Don't try to fit in, don't try to be just a Christian. **Stand out by adding value to the world!**

That's why as Mavuno, we want to work our way over the next ten years to where we are giving at least 1M community service hours per year through our Life groups. And that's also why in March, we embark on an amazing adventure. We'll be going through a ten-week experience in our Life Groups that I believe God will use to bring freedom to our families. If you are new or have not yet done Mizizi, your first step is to sign up for this experience that will help you connect with God, with your purpose and with a community of purpose. Make sure you attend your LG meeting this week and let's begin this journey of transformation together. God doesn't just want us to play church or to be nice Christians. He wants us to be radical disciples who **stand out by adding value to the world!**

Prayer:

- Simama/LG sign ups
- Salvation/Mizizi sign ups
- Blessing on Families
- New series Cheaters in Feb-Bring friends