

## ***A City on a Hill – A Place to Belong No Longer Strangers - Week 6***

SEEN: Many people feel invisible or even worthless because they don't measure up in the eyes of our culture.

*34 Then Peter started speaking: "I now truly understand that God does not show favoritism in dealing with people, 35 but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is welcomed before him. - Acts 10:34-35 NET*

*What do we usually think of that makes someone valuable or important in this world? Who does Acts 10 tell us God welcomes in? God not only sees who we are, He sees who we have the potential to become. Pause for a moment to ask God to open your eyes to the potential in anyone you may have misjudged.*

LOVED: The bible has shown us in many places that we are called to love others like Jesus loved us.

*Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. - Philippians 2:2 NLT*

Ultimately when we display unconditional love like Jesus did, we are witnesses to the transformational power of Christ in us. It may not be easy, but we can choose to follow Jesus' example even when it is painful.

### **WRAP-UP**

In a society that valued self-reliance, triumph, and power, Jesus invited those who are spiritually bankrupt, suffering, and powerless to be part of His kingdom. These are the people God is shaping into the light of the world, a community that witnesses together, to spread the message of Jesus and bring light to a darkened world. Through this collective witness, they form a city on a hill, a safe place of belonging where the broken are transformed, seen, and loved through Christ's sacrificial love.

### **MEMORY VERSE**

*14 "You are the light of the world--like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. - Matthew 5:14 NLT*

*Challenge- Try writing your own version of the Beatitudes in contemporary terms. Who do you include in the poor; the mourners; the meek etc?*

### **INTRODUCTION**

When we choose to make Jesus the Lord of our lives, it is much more than just praying a prayer, it is the beginning of an undeniable transformation. And when we are transformed, the world takes notice, because the world needs hope that change is possible. We can shine the light of Jesus in the darkness of this world. And the light of Jesus shines brightest when we shine together in community.

### **Ice Breaker**

*Have you ever experienced being in the dark, disoriented and seeking a light? Maybe you were driving in the mountains at night or navigating a motel room with lights out. How did it feel to finally see something to guide you in the right direction?*

### **Key Passage**

**14 "You are the light of the world--like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. - Matthew 5:14-16 NLT**

### **STUDY QUESTIONS**

#### **1. Blessed**

As Jesus began His sermon on the mount, he declared several groups of people as being "blessed". They were not the groups you would typically associate with being blessed. In fact, quite the opposite, these people were generally looked down on, oppressed and rejected by society.

Rather than being blessed because of their position, these people are blessed because of God's response to them in their position.

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. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.  
- Matthew 5:3-5 NIV

18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,  
- Luke 4:18 NIV

When you consider the heart of those who find themselves spiritually needy (poor in spirit), broken-hearted (mourning), and humble (meek), why would they be more likely to receive the good news Jesus brings? What kind of barriers do people face who are rich, insensitive and prideful?

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.  
- Matthew 5:6-9 NIV

Maybe you don't immediately find yourself among the "outcasts" on Jesus' list of the "Blessed". But if you look closely, you might find that these unlikely "blessed" groups parallel your own faith journey.

Take some time to recall instances when you found yourself- spiritually needy (poor in spirit), mourning and broken-hearted over sin (yours or others), feeling humbled and meek, yearning (hungry and thirsty) for righteousness, compelled to be merciful, seeking a pure heart before God, or acting as a peacemaker. If you can relate to any of these, share some of those experiences with your group. How did Jesus meet you in these situations?

Jesus invites the rejected and the outcasts in to be knit together and belong to His kingdom, and that includes all of us.

## 2. City on a Hill

When Jesus finished the Beatitudes, He turned His attention to the impact of His believers in this dark world.

12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." - John 8:12 NIV

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. - Matthew 5:14-16 NIV

In the Gospel of John, Jesus refers to Himself as the light of the world and in Matthew He calls His followers the light of the world. Let's consider how both are true. A full moon can illuminate the darkest night, but the moon itself doesn't generate light, it reflects the Sun's light. Similarly, we are not the source of the light we shine, but a reflection of Jesus' power in us.

What do we expect the power of Jesus to produce in our lives that will turn people's attention towards God, rather than ourselves (verse 16)? This passage refers to a lamp in a house and a city on a hill, indicating God's light shines through us both individually (a lamp) and collectively (a city). Share some ideas about the "good deeds" that we can do individually that demonstrate a transformed life and glorify God. Are you aware of what New Life does collectively that demonstrates God's love in our community and beyond? Is there a way you can be a part of shining that light?

## 3. Safe, Seen and Loved

SAFE: During this sermon series we have defined belonging as being in a place where you are safe, seen and loved. But we live in a divisive culture that can undermine our efforts to create a safe space of belonging for those who are different than us.

If we are trying to create a safe space for others to belong in God's kingdom, then there is no place for our judgement. It is not our condemnation of sinners, but God's kindness that leads them to repent and become sons and daughters of God.

3 So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? 4 Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?  
- Romans 2:3-4 NIV

What are the areas you find it most difficult to refrain from judging others? Do most of your friends reflect God's kindness, forbearance and patience, or are they quick to condemn and ridicule? Do you find their attitudes influence how you reflect kindness, forbearance and patience?