

**Matthew in Biblical Perspective:
A Royal Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King –
The Christian and the Church in the World – Part 4**

Matthew 5:13-16

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May 23, 2010 – Morning Sermon

This is our last study in these two sections of the Sermon on the Mount. It has a total of seven sections and we'll finish up our second section by looking at the first two in summation. Let's look at Matthew 5:1-16 says

1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory (not to you) to your Father who is in heaven.

The grass withers. The flower fades. This is the Word of our God. It abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

Thank you for your patience with me in working through the Sermon on the Mount in this regard. In the layout I did about six to eight months ago in preparing for this last Lord's Day was supposed to be my last study in these first two

sections. The Sermon on the Mount is the first of six sermons that are recorded in the Scriptures for us of our Lord's recorded sermons and there are seven sections to this sermon. We are finishing the second section on 'You are the salt of the earth,' 'You are the light of the world.' We will go to the third section when we move to Matthew 5:17 but I have added a sermon to come back in summation of these two sections. Why? I did this a couple of weeks ago where I rearranged the schedule to do this but the Lord put an exclamation point on it for me. In the last week 17 people from this congregation or directly ministered to by this congregation, went into eternity. They had one of two destinations. One eternity was to go into the presence of the Lord in anticipation of the new heavens and the new earth and the other was a Christ-less eternity, a place of utter judgment and torment honoring the holiness of God who will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. We as a church, along with every other church that names Christ as its head, holds to its Word and the Gospel, are the one institution God has ordained to prepare them for that moment. It is appointed unto men once to die and then the judgment. That's what we are here for. There is an ultimate objective and I'll get to it soon but there is a calling that God has before us and upon us to be prepared for that.

A matriarch in this church went to be with the Lord. A previous elder in this church went to be with the Lord. A patriarch in this church yesterday went to be with the Lord. A young man that was sitting here at the baccalaureate service at 8am last Lord's Day is now in eternity. We have the one ministry and the one message for that inevitable moment for all of humanity and I don't know of another passage of Scripture other than the Great Commission itself that so clearly outlines for us the reason Briarwood is here than Matthew 5:1-16. I don't know of another text of Scripture other than the Great Commission passages that outline for us the reason we are here other than this text. That's why I think it is so crucial.

Originally as I was on my way through it I was thinking through the issue of the 50th year of Jubilee. God has allowed this congregation to fulfill a mission for 50 years. For God's glory Briarwood is committed to equipping Christians to reach Birmingham to reach the world for Jesus Christ and in all kinds of ways we have been able to celebrate that. We have celebrated being a Great Commission church. We are celebrating being a great commandment church. We are anticipating celebrating being a great commitment church as we move into the conclusion of this year in the fall and I thank God we have been able to celebrate that with the presence of our founding pastor and the presence of a number of our charter members. I'm grateful for all of that but in my mind's eye I can't help to look forward to another 50 years. And 50 years from this year, 2010, it will be 2060. What will be going on here in 2060 if Jesus hasn't come back yet? Will there be a second Jubilee celebration or will this have been turned into a department store, divided up as a shopping mall, sold off to a funeral home? Or will this sacred space that has been set aside with the sacrificial commitment of God's people still be an instrument to equip believers so that the Kingdom of God

is expanding throughout the whole world? Or will the lamp stand have been removed? Will there be another 50 year of Jubilee if Christ has not returned? I won't be here in 50 years and I won't miss it. I'll be where those joys are forevermore, full and overflowing but what will be happening here?

This text is the only hope that in that year if Christ hasn't returned there will be another Jubilee. Matthew 5:1-16 is the hope that there will be another Jubilee and not just the lamp stand has been removed or a shell of a former ministry is there. Yeah, there is a 50 celebration but it's not a celebration of a movement of the expansion of the Kingdom of God but it's a celebration of a museum in which there are some relics, a trip down memory lane and nostalgia of what the thing used to be with no anticipation of what it is or could be or should be or will be. This text is the key.

What I'd like to do is go back and make five summation statements and then one takeaway but I want to remind you that there is one verse I have not handled yet directly yet and that is the last verse, Matthew 5:16. We are to so live as salt and light that we are to so shine that the works that we do that open up the words that we will say will cause people to give worship and praise to God. Do you know why we do evangelism? It is because worship isn't surrounding the earth yet. The fact that worship is not surrounding the earth from the rising and setting of the sun is why we are doing evangelism. One might think, "Harry I thought we were doing evangelism so people could go to heaven and not to hell, so people could be saved?" Yes we are doing evangelism for those reasons but the ultimate objective of the Gospel ministry is that the Gospel will bring forth the work of the Kingdom so that the worship of the triune God, the Father will be praised through the Son and in the Spirit and that will go throughout the whole earth and that's the reason we are salt and light. It's so that the Father will be praised who sent the Son to save sinners and establish His church as salt and light to restrain sin with light to transform sinners so that being freed from the counterfeit gods of this world and the despair of the gods of this age that we might lift up praise to the One true and living God in whom there is joy and light forever more. That is the ultimate objective that as the waters cover the sea so will the praise of God cover the earth. What is God's plan to get it there? He sent His Son. His Son sent the Spirit to us. The Gospel transformed us now He's called us to be salt and light that praise might arise to the triune God.

There are a lot of secondary blessings from this. We are saved from our sins. We are redeemed. We are born again. He puts reconciliation in our lives and marriages and families. He gives us a reason to live. He gives us a purpose to live. In fact, He becomes our purpose in life. We have a living, personal, vital relationship with Him. He loves us and we love Him. He has given us His Word. He uses us in this world for His glory. We are going to heaven and God has closed the gates of hell and opened the gates of heaven for us. There are all kinds of blessings around it but the ultimate objective is the praise of the glory of His grace in the triune God. God's called us to pull the trigger as His church and

Briarwood taking its place, in that assembling of churches that are built four-square upon Christ, filled with His Spirit and lift Him up. Now what does that mean?

I want to give you five summaries from Matthew 5:1-16. We will work our way through it trying to think through it logically. The first summation is personal Gospel reformation will produce Christ centered and Gospel driven believers who are marked by the humility of self denial and the courage of Divine confidence. I have really tried to think my way through this and word smith my way through it. Personal Gospel reformation is the Gospel saving me from death to life, from the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light. Christ is our focus and the Gospel empowers us believers and there will be two marks which the beatitudes are telling us that will mark out the believers. They will be marked by the humility of self denial and the courage of Divine confidence.

When I worked my way through the beatitudes I said, "Lord, help me break this down." There are eight beatitudes so I couldn't do my three points, three points, three points. Even I figured that out and I didn't do too well in math. I kind of saw a movement from hungering and thirsting for righteousness then to be merciful and then the next thing I know I'm looking back to being pure in heart so that just didn't work out. Then I began to realize that God didn't give these in categories. He has eight, they all start with 'blessed' in which the Gospel blesses you. It comes from Christ by the Spirit through the people of God. It takes hold of you personally. You must be born again. The gates narrow only one comes through at a time. When you come to Christ personally here is what My Gospel does in your life. These all are interdependent. They are inseparable and they build one upon the other upon the other upon the other. Poor in spirit leads to mourning over your sins which leads to meekness which leads to hungering and thirsting for righteousness which leads to being merciful. You'll extend what has been given to you. Then that will lead you to be pure in heart which leads to being a peacemaker and you'll share the Gospel of peace which will lead you to persecution from the world and with that you will rejoice and be glad. Now He is ready to use you as salt and light but it has to start with personal Gospel reformation.

Personal Gospel reformation will empower me. I love Him because He loves me. Christ is the center, circumference and the substance of your life. That Gospel life will mark out self denial and humility. You can't categorize it. They are all interdependent but when you add the eight up its denial of self which brings humility that marks God's people and there is Divine confidence. When the world brings persecution even to kill you you're rejoicing in the courage of the Lord. It's not self confidence or self reliance but Divine confidence.

This leads me to a very uncomfortable conversation with you and your children that I have regularly. I love it when you and or your children have an achievement or accolade and then I go into this clumsy sentence with you or with them. I used

to come up and say “Oh I’m so proud of you” and this passage utterly convicts me so I can’t say that any more. I get kind of clumsy but I try to get this out; “I’m so proud of what the Lord is doing in your life.” I know it takes longer and it won’t fit on the bumper sticker but I’m convinced I have to do it. Now, why not? There are two reasons why. The first reason is I know that pride is the mother of every sin in our life – pride and arrogance. Why would I want to promote that in your child’s life or your life? Why would I want to promote self confidence and self reliance? I know there’s a place for self respect but where does that come from? It says in 1 Corinthians 1:31, “*As it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”* Without Him I can do nothing. Do you believe that? With Him, I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13). So yes it is a little more clumsy and you have to do a little more talking but I don’t want to promote pride.

I do want to promote in you an utter confidence that your God is able to do everything He has promised to accomplish in your life and through your life. As your days are so shall your strength be and it’s not your strength. He is your strength. That’s what the beatitudes do within us. They say ‘no’ to self. Poor in spirit, meek, mourn and confidence in the Lord that He who began a good work in me will complete it unto the day of Christ Jesus and who can bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the One who justifies. Who is this who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died yet is raised at the right hand of the Father who now intercedes for us. What should we say to these things, if God be for us who can be against us? That’s what marks out those who are Christ centered and Gospel driven and that’s what God begins to do in our life.

So let me ask you a question. Do you think Jesus is powerful? It’s not a trick question. Absolutely, Jesus is powerful. When Jesus comes to us what is His lead to us? Hey give your life to Me I am mighty! No, it’s come unto Me all of you who are weary and heavy laden and I’ll give you rest for your soul. Why? Come unto Me for I am gentle and humble. Is He strong? Absolutely, but watch how My strength comes in gentleness and humility, as He humbled Himself to save us from our sins. It is that dynamic and glorious testimony of our Savior that marks out God’s people and then He becomes our confidence not us so that we’re pointing people to Him all the time. In that time that the early church was apart of what do you think the world thought about Peter and Paul? They didn’t think very much of them. In fact, they’ll end up killing them in Rome. They didn’t think much of them. They mocked them. They tried to stone them. They tried to kill them. They couldn’t stand them. What if Caesar showed up, what would people do? They would probably bow and show him homage by saying something like, “O great Caesar, Caesar is Lord.” What would have happened if Nero showed up? They not only would have done that but then they would have run to hide somewhere real quick if Nero had shown up. Caesar and Nero had the power of an empire and arrogance of self. Today we keep naming our children Peter and Paul but we name our dogs Nero and Caesar. The Lord is mighty to save. He is our confidence and whenever we begin to think more of ourselves than we ought

then that pride leads us to many sins and that arrogance leads us to a fall.

The second summation is the key to cultural Gospel reformation is always personal Gospel reformation and the inevitable end of personal Gospel reformation will be Gospel cultural reformation. I know it's a little wordy but the Gospel comes into your life and my life and works this beatitude transformation by blessing us and it attaches these Kingdom blessings of character traits that begin to work in humility and self denial with Divine confidence. It brings forth courage in our life and as that begins to work what does that do? That brings Gospel cultural reformation. I have chosen the words carefully because I'm not saying that God does that in you so that America will be powerful. I'm not talking about that. I am more than happy for God to bless my nation through His people as He has in the past and I pray and long for that. I'm talking about a Gospel cultural reformation where the values of the Kingdom lived in the lives of God's people, brought through into the culture, begin to be absorbed all around us as salt and light begins to do its work. Those Kingdom values begin to be seen all around us and instead of the curse, chaos, and despair of sin come the order, ardor and pleasantness of that reconciling, redeeming work of the Gospel through the people of God.

In other words, God has saved you and Christ is the focus of your life. The Gospel is transforming you and the Holy Spirit is empowering you. In that Gospel driven life wherever you go you're going to make a difference. You may not see it immediately anymore than you see the salt doing its work in the vegetable immediately. You may think this is just a little light but whenever you cut the light on the darkness begins to disappear. No matter how small the light is the darkness has to start leaving. You will make a difference in your office and your neighborhood if Gospel reformation is in your life. If Gospel reformation is in your life then Gospel transformation will start to come in that office or neighborhood. It will show up in the way you talk and it will affect the talk goes on in those areas – what you laugh at and don't laugh at. It will show up in the way you dress. I'm not talking about being a Christian means you dress 50 years behind the style. It doesn't matter what the style is, a Christian has modesty. Where the Lord is there is order. That is what comes about and is reflected in the way we live. Where Satan is there is dirtiness, uncleanness, etc.

Where God is working then something begins to happen. When God is doing something inside it begins to come through on the outside. That begins to affect the way that people begin to function. Unfortunately when this begins to happen today we think, this greatly pains me, if our life starts making a difference and people feel uncomfortable in blatant sin against God because of the way we are living and again I'm not talking about arrogance but I'm talking about a humble, consistent, courageous living for Christ, then people begin to feel uncomfortable. They begin to make some adjustments and some how the church gets embarrassed about that. I'm sorry you feel uncomfortable when I'm around. No, praise the Lord you're like that. I can tell you who can make you real comfortable

and that's Jesus because He'll take you right where you are and change you from the inside out. I want to talk with you about the Lord. So God begins to bring transformation wherever you go, by the way you live, what you say, what you do and the way you act. That work begins to work in powerful ways that you've never seen before in your office, fraternity, your team, in the classroom, in that conversation with that teacher or professor. I'm not talking about arrogance or self righteousness but I am talking about a change and a difference that takes place in the way we hold forth Christ with graciousness yet courage.

Here is the third summation. If humility and Divine confidence mark out Gospel reformation and if Gospel reformation brings cultural transformation as salt restrains sin and light begins to dispel darkness, then if I am faltering where do I need to focus? The third summation is inevitably the beginning point of personal Gospel reformation is the beatitudes in general and the first beatitude in particular. In other words, I'm not making an impact. Why? I'm not persecuted falsely for Christ's sake. Why? It is because I'm not a peacemaker. I'm not holding forth the Gospel of peace. Why? It is because my heart has been distracted. Instead of pure in heart it's been distracted. Why? It's because I haven't loved mercy and I'm not merciful. Why? It is because I haven't hungered and thirsted for righteousness. Why? It's because I haven't known meekness. Why? It's because I haven't mourned over sin. Why? It's because I haven't been poor in spirit. I think these things are interdependent and inseparable. I believe they do their work in our lives and one leads to the other in this beautiful eight cascading waterfall. They work into this cool reservoir that then pours out as a refreshing stream to the world and they are all working together.

This is what I am convicted of in my own personal life and I want to share it with you. I want to work through all these beatitudes and I know that it starts with being poor in spirit. I don't know if you're poor financially but you can be poor financially and proud in spirit. I don't whether you're rich financially and that certainly could affect you with pride but I have also met people who seemingly have a lot that realize they don't have anything because it all belongs to Jesus. He has very carefully put the phrase poor in spirit there. There is a spiritual bankruptcy in my life that I realize there is no good thing that dwells within me therefore Lord You are my life so do Your work in my life.

That leads me to summation number four. Summation number four is those who have been saved by grace are called by Christ to restrain sin as "the Salt of the earth" and bringing the transformation power of the Gospel as "the Light of the world." When Gospel reformation is working in my life how can there be Gospel transformation around me? It is by being salt and light. That is what God has called us to be. I just finished doing the Truth Project with my small group that I lead on Monday nights. On the twelfth DVD it starts by saying "We've been talking about what it means to be focused upon Christ so that you with your mind, heart and soul are serving Christ and every week you have been coming to me saying 'okay so what does this mean I should do?' so I want to give you the

answer now in the twelfth study. My answer is I don't know." I know what he was saying. I don't know Christ in you and what He is calling you to do. In the church He has given you a spiritual gift that you are a member of the body of Christ and you're needed. Then out into the world He has given a calling upon you; some to an elected office, some to the legal world, some to home making, some to construction, some to here.

I don't know your gift and how you fit in the body of Christ as a Gospel redeemed person that's Christ centered and Gospel driven and I don't know what your calling is out there in the world but this I do know. Every one of us is called to be salt and light. Where I go, sin ought to feel uncomfortable. God has called me to be an antiseptic. So God makes sin uncomfortable in my life first. I know that wherever I go I'm not to put my light under a basket. It's to be put on a stand so people see, not me, but Jesus and will glorify the Lord. I do know that Christ has called me to do that. You can't be salt and light if you don't know Christ and it will not happen if you're not connected to the body of Christ. Ya'll, you plural, are the salt of the earth.

I'm not talking just about you but the church in general and as it applies then let the Holy Spirit speak to you. We need to quit this drive by church stuff. I am a member of the body of Christ. It's not just merely that there's a Sunday morning service I might go to if they get the music just right and the right people are doing the right things. No, I have been saved from the kingdom of this world. I have been brought into the Kingdom of God. He has planted His church as the embassy of the Kingdom to equip me and I am connected to my brothers and sisters so that together, we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. I have to be connected to the body of Christ and I have to know that connection to the body of Christ. Then I have to know that the Lord will work through me to the lives of other people. I have to love people. I have to love God's people. I have to love lost people.

We somehow feel like we're not going to impact the world unless we modify the message so that the world says we'll accept it. No, we don't need to make the Gospel relevant. It is. Nothing is more relevant. Now, we need to be relevant and I'm not talking about how you dress, talk and walk. Relevant are people who are different for Christ. They make an impact. We keep thinking if I'm like them they will come to Jesus. No, they are looking for something different, held in graciousness, gentleness and humility but with courage. That is what people are looking for and do you love people? It's not a program that connects you to people. It's people that love people and I'm going to go where you are. I'm going to bring you into my home. My home will be a lighthouse for the Gospel. My home is going to shake out the salt into my community and wherever I go. I want that to be true in my life.

Recently, I did a men's conference at Grace Evangelical Church in Memphis, Tennessee. Did you see the movie *Blindside*? It was about a Christian family, in

God's providence, ran into this humongously big guy who had very little resources and brought him in, loved and the whole thing kept unfolding. They kept trying to do the next right thing for Jesus and of course now this big guy is a professional football player but what was interesting was the lady that played the wife is named Sandra Bullock. I asked Jimmy Young the pastor of Grace Evangelical Church if it was true about what she said recently. As far as I know up until a month ago she continues in conversations with the Tuohy family and Mrs. Tuohy in particular. I don't know if she's converted or will be converted or what but it was very interesting what she said at the end of that movie that clearly these people were propelled by Christ and the Gospel to do what they did in the life of someone. Sandra Bullock is a great actress and that may be because she is a graduate of East Carolina University, I'm not sure. Sandra said, "I finally met a real Christian." Now, I am not validating her profile of what a real Christian is because I don't know what her definition is but this does tell me something. In the name of Christianity she wasn't looking for somebody just like her who happens to go to church on Sunday. She saw people who were different with courage and humility, and that's what drew her to them.

That is what happens to the world. They're like the moth to the flame. It is what is different about God's people with humility and courage in Christ. We think I've got to be like them for them to like Jesus yet actually you have to be different than them but like them. You have to love them but you have to be different so that they want to come to Jesus. We are to be salt and light of the earth and of the world. God has called us to be that and do that. That is the calling He has put before us. That's what He does in our life and through us. That's the way God accomplishes His purposes. I'm telling you light works. Wherever there is darkness light works.

I want to give you the most horrific situation I've ever had in my life serving Jesus Christ as a pastor. This is the most challenging. I was in Charlotte, North Carolina and I received a phone call. I'll give you the synopsis of about three or four conversations that led to this. "Harry, there's a family we want you to visit because there's a woman we believe is demon possessed. You won't believe what the house feels like. There's a chill. Would you come and help us?" I said, "Let me pray about this." I went. "Harry, what are you going to do?" was the next question. Do you remember the movie the Exorcist? They even asked me if I was going to bring some symbols or some holy water. I said, "Absolutely not. I'm going to bring Jesus. That's all I'm going to do. I'm not going to march around the house with arrogance saying, "I command you..., I command you..." I'm not going to sprinkle bat dust or throw garlic or put crosses in front of everybody. Here's what I'm going to do. Jesus Christ is Lord. I'm going to resist the Evil one and he will have to flee. I'm going to cut the light of the Gospel on and the darkness has to go." Salt and light is God's calling upon us in this world to restrain sin and show the way to Jesus.

The fifth summation is Christ centered and Gospel blessed believers as "Salt and

Light” must avoid adulteration (of the salt), isolation (of the salt or the light), and individualism. Those are the three warnings I would give. We are the salt and light of the earth but we must avoid adulteration. Why? Don’t let the salt lose its saltiness. How does this happen? It happens by mixing it with a false message or a manipulative way of life. Don’t adulterate the salt or it is no good except to be thrown out into the trash heap or to be walked on. God, don’t let us adulterate the message or the life that God has called us to. Don’t let us isolate. We want to get out of the salt shaker. Thank you for the church that pulls us together for its saltiness but then we want to get out of the salt shaker together for Jesus Christ, going out into the world to win people to Christ that God would use us to restrain sin where we go so people would come to Christ. God, finally don’t let us get caught up in individualism. I know that you have to be saved personally.

To be a Christian you must personally come to Jesus Christ but when you come to Christ we are to be connected to the body of Christ. I have personal responsibilities, personal callings and I have to be saved individually, no group plans here to work everybody into heaven, but we have to dismiss particularly in our American individualism. I need my band of brothers and sisters. I need the preaching of the Word, fellowship, worship, disciples and I need the body of Christ. I need to work with God’s people so that God will use us effectively with synergy in this world.

There were two graphic pictures years ago. A very popular magazine had two pictures in it. One was a picture of this homestead with hundreds of acres of wheat. The family that lived there tilled the ground of hundreds of acres of wheat and there was this big panoramic shot of it. The next picture was on the homestead itself with the mother weeping on the porch and then the story. Late one afternoon their four year old boy had wandered off and they didn’t realize it until after supper. So he was gone all night. The next morning he wasn’t there. He wasn’t in his bedroom. They realized he had gone somewhere so they began to search for him for a whole day. They looked and looked and looked. On the third day they called for some friends. The boy left one day, they looked the next day and they called for some friends the third day. They all looked everywhere. They searched through hundreds of acres of wheat. This is a true story. They didn’t find the boy. On the fourth day one of the neighbors said, “Look, let’s start at the front door, pull everyone together, join hands and let’s start walking through the fields.” It was on that afternoon of the fourth day they found the boy dead. I know they were well meaning and energetic but what would have happened if they had joined hands on that first day they were together?

I know you have personal callings. I want to unleash you for it but brothers and sisters we must be united together in the cause of Jesus Christ because if you read that passage the way it is written it would say, “Ya’ll are the salt of the earth. Ya’ll are the light of the world. All ya’ll are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.” It’s all of us together in Jesus Christ focused on Christ. So what does that mean? Here is the takeaway. It is just one. It is the Church in general and

therefore Briarwood in particular must be passionately committed to the ministry of prayer and the Word as a Christ centered, Gospel saturated “equipping center.” We must be an equipping center for the work of the Gospel. The two pillars are prayer and the Word. There is intercessory prayer and the Word of God from the pulpit, to the Sunday school, to the small group, to personal Bible study. So there is prayer and the Word and Christ is our focus. The Spirit of God empowers us with Gospel power, Gospel driven and an equipping center. For the next generation of children who are going to know Christ, for the next generation of new believers who you hear profess their faith, for the next generation of pastors, for the next generation of leaders, God has called us to be that equipping center.

Jesus preached that sermon. His disciples listened to Him. They came off of the mountain and what did they do? They began to sing praises for three years. They sat at a table of fellowship with Him for three years. They listened to those sermons for three years. They got into small groups of 70, 12 and 3 for discipleship for three years. All of those things began to happen and then Jesus who has said this sermon on the side of that hill then ascends to heaven. He says, “As the Father sent Me so send I you.” They move into an apostate nation who has denied the Word of God among the Jews. They moved into the Roman Empire with all of its corruption and immorality and 25 years later a man stands up in Europe and says, “These people have turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6).” They were equipped with the Gospel to serve Christ. That’s what God has called Briarwood to be. If we want to be anything else I think we just need to close the doors. We’re not a religious center or a monument to the past. We praise God for what He has done but this is the Kingdom call to be an equipping center so that the Gospel transforms and sends God’s people together for Christ as salt and light. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together. Thank You for the privilege to be in this passage these past weeks. Father, I pray You would forgive me for my lack of ability to handle what is such a crucial text but I thank You that it does not rest upon me but upon Your Holy Spirit, Your people and their love for Jesus. Father, may the Gospel do its work from the inside out. Do Your Gospel work in us and then unite us for Christ and His Kingdom, salt and light. Dear friend today if you have not come to Christ may I invite you to Him. You have to come personally so come and put your trust in Christ and say, “Jesus I’m a sinner, I put my trust in You.” Come to the family of God that we might equip each other to go into this world as salt and light. Jesus I pray this to You, in Your Name, Amen.

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