

Union United Methodist Church

Sermon Outline: **Blessed to Be A Blessing, Part 6: Blessing Blockers**

February 12th, 2023. Pastor Michael Larbi

Readings: **1 Corinthians 2; Matthew 5:13-20**

1. Recall from last 5 weeks (outlines & sermons on <https://unionumcnc.com>)

- *January 8: Identity & Purpose*
- *January 15: Divine Calling & Divine Grace for the call (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)*
- *January 22: Blessed & Entrusted with the Gospel; Called to fish for people*
- *January 29: Nature of Blessings: static & dynamic; Power of the Gospel - must be preached, taught, and demonstrated as Jesus did.*
- *February 5: Blessed with Divine Eternal Life (**zōē**); Called to be Light of the world, salt of the world. The spiritual life of prayer & dependence on the Holy Spirit is critical to fulfilling this call*

2. The Spiritual Life: Growing Into Maturity and Letting Our Light Shine

a. Starting Point: Those who don't know Christ

Our witness to those who do not know the Lord should be about Christ Jesus, Christ Crucified, the Spirit and Power of God

"When I came to you, brothers, **I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you in lofty words or wisdom.** ²For **I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.** ⁴My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, **5so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.**" 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

b. The Mature/Maturing Christian -

▪ Can handle spiritual wisdom

"Among the mature we do speak wisdom... we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory."

1 Corinthians 2:6-7 NRSV

- **Lives a spiritual life**

- **full dependence on the Holy Spirit who reveals things to us**

"As it is written,

What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,

nor the human heart conceived,

what God has prepared for those who love him"—

these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

1 Corinthians 2:9-11 NRSV

- **Understands the gifts of God.**

"Now **we have received** not the spirit of the world, but **the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.**" 1 Corinthians 2:12

"Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God's Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. **15Those who are spiritual discern all things"** 1 Corinthians 2:14-15 NRSV.

- c. **The Immature Christian - Marks of the Spiritual Infant**

1And so, brothers and sisters, **I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.** 2I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, 3for you are still of the flesh. **For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations?** 4For when one says, "I belong to Paul," and another, "I belong to Apollos," are you not merely human?

3. Living in Divine Blessings, Removing Obstacles, Blessing Others

- **Recall: Jesus preached, taught, and demonstrated God's power**

"Jesus went throughout Galilee, **teaching** in their synagogues, **proclaiming [preaching] the good news of the kingdom, and healing** every disease and sickness among the people." Matthew 4:23 NIV

- **Some of What Jesus Taught - Matthew 5**

- **The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)**

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.

6"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive 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.

10"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- **We are the salt of the earth, and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16)**

- **Importance of Living by Divine Moral Law (Matthew 5:17-38)**

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. 18For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

19Therefore, **whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven** 20For I tell you, unless your

righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:17-20 NRSV

When we do not live by God's moral laws as laid out in the scriptures, we hinder the blessing and flow of the power of God. We are saved by grace but that gives us no excuse to live in sin.

Unlike the scribes and Pharisees, we are not to be hypocritical about obeying the moral laws of God.

Jesus gives us examples here that goes beyond just the letter of the law to the spirit of the law.

- **Murder**

21“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ **22But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment;** and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire

23So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift.

- **Adultery**

27“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ **28But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

29If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. **30And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away;** it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

- **Divorce**

31“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

- **Oaths**

33“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ **34**But I say to you, **Do not swear at all**, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, **35**or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. **36**And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. **37**Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; **anything more than this comes from the evil one.**

- **Eye for an eye**

38“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ **39**But I say to you, **Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also**; **40**and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; **41**and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. **42**Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

- **Love for our enemies**

43“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ **44**But I say to you, **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you**, **45**so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous

4. Conclusion: Let Us Walk Blameless Before The Lord, and in Divine Blessings

“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:48 NRSV

“When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the **Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. 2**And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.”

Genesis 17:1-2 NRSV