

Between Us and Jesus

What are the right connections?

Saturday, 2/8 at 4:00 | Sunday, 2/9 at 9:00

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany – 2020

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: There are connections between many things in this life; *sometimes they are right*, but sometimes they are wrong. For example: *It is **right** to trust in Jesus for heaven*, but **wrong** to try to follow His example for heaven.

Now, let's identify some *right connections* between us and Jesus in **Matthew chapter 5**. The chapter begins with eight statements of blessing (a.k.a. the beatitudes); here are four:

- ☺ ³ **“Blessed are the poor in spirit”** – How? *They know of their spiritual helplessness to save themselves!*
- ☺ ⁴ **“Blessed are those who mourn”** – How? *They mourn over their sins, which separated them from God!*
- ☺ ⁶ **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness”** – How? *They ask God for forgiveness!*
- ☺ ⁸ **“Blessed are the pure in heart”** – How? *They are controlled by the new nature, from the inside out!*

What people, *in a spiritual sense*, are ▶poor, ▶mourning, ▶hungering, ▶thirsting, and ▶pure? Those are people *chosen by God* to be His *holy children* through *Jesus*! Now, let's understand more *right connections* between us and Jesus...

1. **You Are Salt:** Jesus said: 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.** // What is the right connection? All people who believe in Jesus for eternal life ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH! What does that mean? **"...their business is to prevent its decay..."**

(Kretzmann). As salt can preserve food from getting rotten, *so believers ARE PREVENTING THE EARTH FROM BEING TOTALLY EVIL!* Lenski made this striking comment: **"...if [people] are not salt they are not believers"** (199).

2. **You Are Light:** ¹⁴ **"You are the light of the world.** // What is the right connection? All who believe in Jesus ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD! What does that mean? Jesus gave these explanations...

a. **A city set on a hill** [or anything higher than a hill] **cannot be hidden.** // Think about the moon... it has no light of itself; however, *because it IS the moon, IT AUTOMATICALLY REFLECTS THE SUN!* What about us? As believers in Jesus, WE AUTOMATICALLY REFLECT HIM TO OTHERS! What if we are ashamed? Jesus said, **"...whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels"** (Mk. 8:38 NAS). What if we are afraid? Jesus said, **"...do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"** (Matt. 10:28 NAS).

b. 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.** // As no sensible person would light a lamp – *and then cover it*, so neither should we – **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD** – cover who we are!

- c. ¹⁶ **In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.** // When we reflect Jesus, *we give God credit and lift Him up* 😊; when we hide our connection to Jesus, *we discredit God and push Him down* 😞.
3. **Jesus Fulfilled the Law for Everyone:** ¹⁷ **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets [the OT Scriptures]; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”** // What are the right connections?
- Jesus endorsed the OT Scriptures, *so we should know them and fully rely upon them!*
 - Jesus came for the purpose of fulfilling the OT Scriptures – thus *keeping every law and doing all that was promised to remove every sin*. So we should always rejoice in ♦Him and ♦His finished work!
4. **Every Detail of the Scriptures Will Be Fulfilled:** ¹⁸ **“For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”** // What does that mean? An “iota” is the smallest Hebrew letter and a “dot” is part of a Hebrew letter. In other words, Jesus said: **“Not one particle of the written Word will pass away without receiving its fulfillment”** (Lenski, 207). What are the right connections? Jesus is calling us to *rightly understand* God’s work to accomplish His Word; **Lenski** gave this 3-part explanation (fulfilled, in process, yet to be fulfilled) (209-210):
- “Some of God’s words have already reached their complete purpose and fulfillment..., for instance, [the OT civil laws, which only applied to ancient Israel, the**

ceremonial laws, *which were fulfilled by Jesus*, and] **all that was written about Christ's redemptive work."**

- b. "Other words of God are still in the process of fulfillment, for instance, what [Jesus] has said about the church."
- c. Still other words have not yet been fulfilled, for instance, those concerning the [end of the world]."

5. **Our Reputation and a Warning:** ¹⁹ "Therefore whoever relaxes [abolishes] 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." // The focus here is on the moral laws. What is the right connection? See *Isaiah 66:2*.

- a. Reputation in Heaven: People will be known by *how they lived and taught God's Word!*
- b. Warning: If those who abolish *ONE OF THE LEAST* will be called least, what about those who abolish *SEVERAL OF THE LEAST* or *ONE OF GREATER SIGNIFICANCE*?

6. **From Confusion to Clarify:** ²⁰ "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." // What is the right connection? *Trust in Jesus*, not in your goodness!

This Week's Challenge: Since God in Christ has changed us in wonderful ways, *may those changes show in our lives!*

Let Us Pray: Dear Holy Spirit, as someone disarming a bomb is very careful, so move us to carefully ▶ trust in Jesus, ▶ understand the Bible, and ▶ live it in our daily lives!

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