**True Faithfulness**

This week we reflected on a portion of the Sermon on the Mount that is often seen as three distinct parts, each dealing with its own subject. However, we chose instead to bind these three portions together under one umbrella and reflect on the one subject that binds these three portions of scripture together – the one underlying theme, the current that flows through each of these otherwise distinct passages... faithfulness. But we must be careful to not use this word too lightly, because when we pay close attention to this passage from Matthew 5 we will soon see that the kind of faithfulness demanded of the intentional Christian life is the same as that which was exemplified in the life of Jesus – a faithfulness that was willing to pay any price at all. The kind of faithfulness that will be glad to make any sacrifice.

Most of us would agree that there are few characteristics as beautiful and praiseworthy in the life of a person than the simple attitude of faithfulness. Whether it be toward friends and family, or in the workplace, or as a follower of Christ – the simple beauty of a life lived faithfully is deeply inspiring. And the truth is that any attempt to live an intentional Christian life will have to be marked by an earnest desire to be faithful in every respect, to every person, at all times and through any circumstance.

This passage presents us with three directions in which we have to be faithful... *Firstly, toward God*. When it comes to faithfulness toward God it is often the little things that matter most. The late Baptist pastor, F.B. Mayer, once said: “Don’t waste your time waiting and longing for large opportunities which may never come. But faithfully handle the little things that are always claiming your attention.” When it comes to our daily faithfulness to God we must remember that it is precisely that - daily. In the grind of everyday life through the simple tasks that constitute our day, these are the areas in which we need to be faithful toward God. *Secondly, toward those closest to us*. It is a sad fact that it is the ones closest to us, our spouses, our children, our dearest friends who often bear the brunt of our unfaithfulness. Perhaps it is because these are the very people whom we tend to take for granted, we neglect our relationships with them – assuming that their regular presence in our lives means that we are entitled to their nearness – and the result is that we often subject them to our selfish unfaithfulness. Choosing a meeting over time with our kids; opting for that extra round of drinks after golf rather than going home to enjoy dinner with our spouses; preferring a promotion in the workplace to safeguarding a relationship with a respected colleague. These are all traps that we often fall into because we lack a certain determined faithfulness toward those closest to us. *Thirdly, toward all people*. Perhaps the most difficult direction in which to be constantly faithful is toward all people, strangers, passers-by people whom we have never met before and will probably never come across again – it is easy to imagine that these encounters are not that important and so our real faithfulness is sometimes reserved for everyone but them. However, when it come to the kind of faithfulness that is demanded of the intentional Christian life, these are the very people who deserve our faithfulness – we should be indiscriminate with those who should enjoy our faithfulness. Our integrity in faithfulness (our *yes*) should be true at all times, to all people.

If we want to live a truly intentional Christian life we must take seriously Jesus’ demand for faithfulness in all respects. We must be faithful toward God through the kind of lives we live – lives that steer away from sin rather than toward it. We must be faithful toward our closest family and friends by taking our commitments to them seriously and never compromising the dignity of our relationships with them. We must be faithful toward all people becoming trustworthy and honest keepers of our promises.

Toward all people, at all times, we must be faithful – as Christ himself was faithful to all.

Food for Thought:

Mother Theresa once said, “I am not called to be successful, I’m called to be faithful.”