



THE SERMON

on the Mount

Being the Antidote to Cultural Illness

Matthew 5:13-16

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

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.”

Seek peace for where you're placed...

Jeremiah 29:7

“Seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”



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Two Metaphors

1. Salt

- It's benefits and purpose are assumed and not described
- Saltiness is salt's essence
- How would we know if we've lost our saltiness?

2. Light

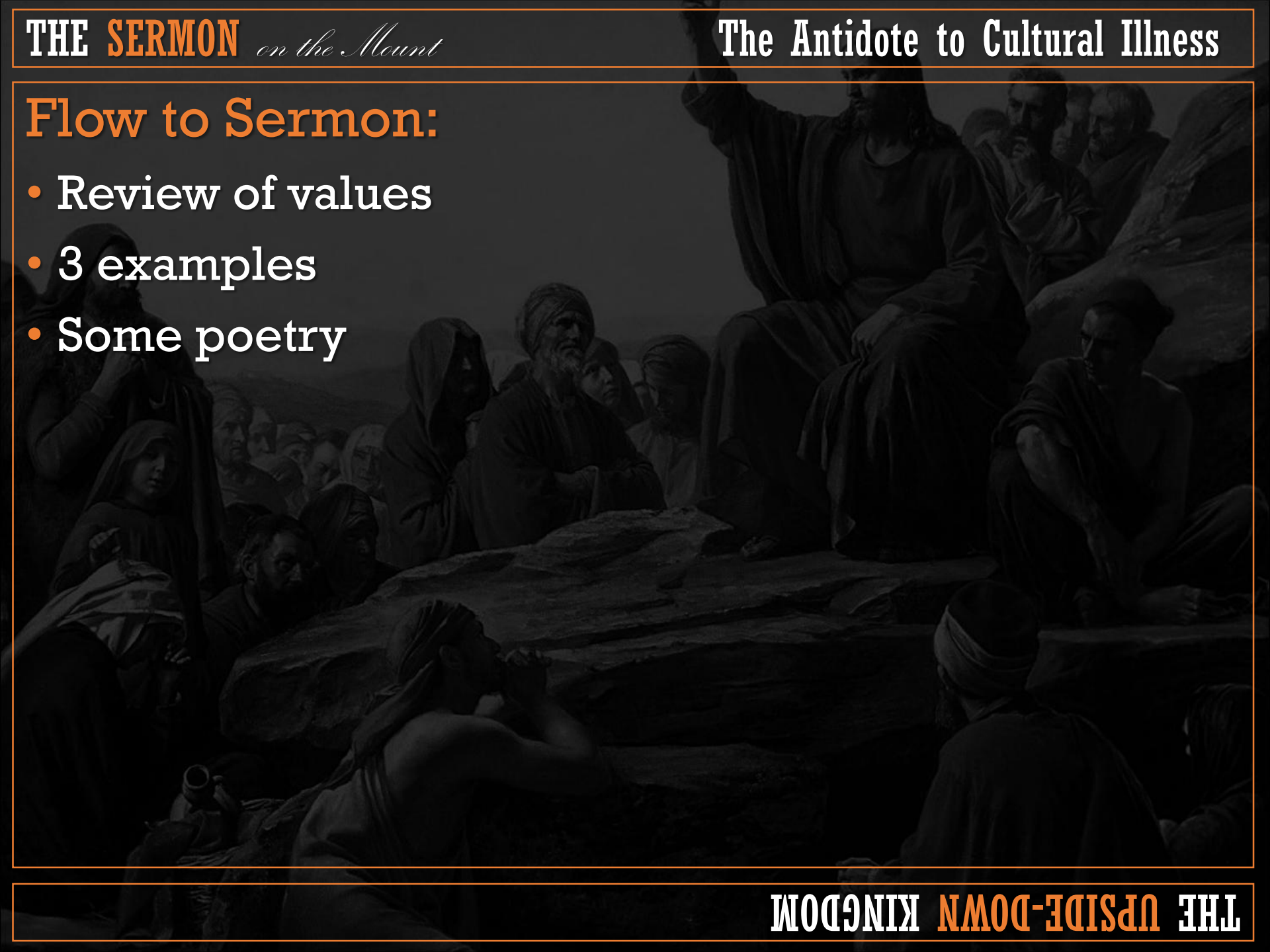
- Light shines in darkness, a light shining in daytime is not all that necessary.
- Light serves a purpose, it lights up a space.
- There is no sense in lighting up a space where no one needs it
- A purpose of applying this metaphor to ourselves: that the world might see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Central Q's

- How are we fundamentally different from the culture around us?
- What are the ways in which we are aligned or misaligned with the general populace?
- Is this difference relevant?

Flow to Sermon:

- Review of values
- 3 examples
- Some poetry



“Blessings”: clues to what salt and light are

- Those who mourn
- The meek
- Those who desire righteousness
- The merciful
- The pure in heart
- The peacemakers
- The persecuted because of righteousness

General Cultural Values

- Work hard, get ahead
- Self-sufficiency
- Success measured by material markers, education, success of children, ability to retire in certain style.
- Don't be a burden
- Beauty and perfection very narrowly defined
- Keep busy – “idle hands are the devil's workshop”
- Democratic morality (what we collectively agree to, not defined by a larger transcendent entity)
- Don't hurt others, respect others obey the law

Counter-cultural Living

- Are there other ways in which to align with the values of the Kingdom of God in order to bring “peace and prosperity” to our city?

Jesus & “Undesirables”

- Tax collector
- Woman with a bleed problem
- Woman possessed and then healed
- Woman whose only son had just died
- Prostitute who anoints his feet and hair with oil
- Samaritan woman
- Blind Bartemeus
- Children generally
- The mentally ill (casting out demons to a herd of pigs)
- The working class (disciples)
- The ruling class (priests, rich young ruler)
- Thief on the cross



Good Samaritan

- Compassion and action trumps social norms
- Direct opposition to understandings about racial norms and how holiness was understood at that time.



Francis of Assisi

Adopted 3 encompassing values

- Humility as antidote to pride/hubris
- Simplicity as antidote to complexity
- Poverty as antidote to greed/avarice

Very evangelical way of life – serving the community, identifying with the community, action in the community.



In the World, But Not of It

Aliens, foreigners:

1 Peter 2:11 “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.”

Benefit it vs Becoming it:

1 John 2:15-17 says “stop loving the world”. Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

Live Good Lives; Don't Love the World

1 Peter 2:12 says: live good lives.

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

John offers this: Don't love the world. Because this is what the world offers:

- Lust for physical pleasure
- Lust for everything your eye takes in
- Pride in our possessions

Be the Antidote

- Francis chose three cultural ills of his time, and chose to be the opposite of those.
 - Humility as antidote to pride/hubris
 - Simplicity as antidote to complexity
 - Poverty as antidote to greed/avarice
- Where do you see yourself playing the role of antidote?
- Recall the purpose: Glorify your Father in heaven.

Poem – Malcolm Guite

We bless you, who have spelt your blessings out,
And set this lovely lantern on a hill
Lightening darkness and dispelling doubt
By lifting for a little while the veil.
For longing is the veil of satisfaction
And grief the veil of future happiness
We glimpse beneath the veil of persecution
The coming kingdom's overflowing bliss

Poem – Malcolm Guite

Oh make us pure of heart and help us see
Amongst the shadows and amidst the mourning
The promised Comforter, alive and free,
The kingdom coming and the Son returning,
That even in this pre-dawn dark we might
At once reveal and revel in your light.