

WHO CARES?

Matthew 5:1-12

February 16, 2020

Tony Campolo, Baptist preacher, professor at a Christian College in Philadelphia, and an extraordinary speaker with something to say to all audiences) told one time of a student he had in a large introductory class. Campolo was about half-way through his lecture when a student stood up about three quarters of the way back, and he yelled at the top of his lungs, “Bull . . . “ Campolo yelled back, “Sit down.” And the student yelled, “No,” and he said that word again. Campolo said, “Sit down or I’m going to throw you out of this class.” The student shouted back, “Who cares?” “If I throw you out of here, you’re never coming back in here; you’re finished in this course for good.” And he yelled, “Who cares?” Campolo said, “If I throw you out of this course, you’re going to get thrown out of school.” And he said, “Who cares?” And Campolo said, “If you get thrown out of this school, you won’t be able to get a job . . .” and then he stopped, because he knew where this was going. ‘If you can’t get a job, then you won’t be able to have any money.’ And he would have yelled, “Who cares?” ‘Well, if you don’t have any money , then you won’t be able to buy the things that make for a comfortable, satisfying life.’ And he would have yelled, “WHO CARES?”

People, you can’t be called a Christian until you can look at all the things this culture has to offer, and say, “Who cares?” A society has power over its populace as long as the people in that society anxiously desire what it has to offer.

Remember your teachers in school? Boy, did they have power over us. They had the power to make us read books we didn’t want to read, to write reports we didn’t want to write, and to stay up till all hours studying for tests we didn’t want to take, huh? And why? Because those teachers had a pocketful of good grades that they would give to anyone that would do what those teachers

told them to do. Oh, and they had our parents on their side, didn't they? That really may have been the main reason, but go with me here on what the teacher has that the student wants.

When students no longer want what their teachers have to offer, those students are no longer under their control; they are free from their dominating influence.

People, until we can look at our culture and the values it thrusts upon us and can say, 'I no longer want what you have. I have another set of commitments; I have something more precious than this society, this economy, this political order has to offer . . .' Until you and I can look at the system around us and say, "Who cares?" we will never be free from the control of the system. "Be not conformed to this world," the scripture says, but be ye transformed." And the beatitudes have a blueprint for what you and I want to be transformed TO.

"Blessed are the poor." I know it says poor in spirit, but in Luke it says simply 'Blessed are the poor,' and that's probably closer to what Jesus really said. "Blessed are the poor." Now, I don't mean the economically unfortunate. I mean blessed are those who may have a great deal of this world's substance, but gave it up to serve Jesus.

You know, we gave Mother Teresa the Nobel Prize. You know why? We gave her the Nobel Prize for doing what Jesus called all of us to do. Blessed are those who are sensitive to the poor, and who are willing to pay the price for the poor. When you and I become disciples of Jesus in the sense that we are ready to sacrifice everything and anything that we have for the sake of others in the name of Jesus, then we will be approaching the Kingdom of Heaven.

'Ready to sacrifice anything and everything in the name of Jesus' That is a great, liberating freedom. And we've all experienced it, I think. Remember a time when you were saving for something you wanted, and then someone in your

family got sick, a school trip came up, or there was an emergency? What did you do? Without thinking twice, you took that earmarked money and moved in to fill this need . . . and you were happy about it. You were glad it was there to use.

Blessed are the poor, right? the poor who were ready to sacrifice everything and any thing we have for the sake of others in the name of Jesus Christ. There is the need, and you and I are able to help; glad for the opportunity and that we have the wherewithal TO help. That kind of impoverishing is fun, right? You feel spiritual and you feel you've made a difference, and you can laugh at the impotent grasping of culture around you. God makes you and me into hilarious givers. The fun of it all.

But the passage does also say, "Blessed are those who mourn." Blessed are those who have their heart broken by those things which break the heart of God. When Jesus comes into your life, we're not only going to laugh like we've never laughed before, but we're going to cry like we've never cried before, too.

Tony Campolo took a Sociology class on a field trip down to Haiti. A little boy came crawling up to them crippled. He wasn't crippled from birth, he was crippled because his parents deliberately broke his arms and his legs and made him crippled because he could make more begging as a cripple than as a normal little boy.

They went to a village over next to the border with the Dominican Republic, and in the morning the priest awoke them early because there was something he wanted to show them. The class followed the priest and his cart at 6:00 in the morning through the mud streets lined by lean-to shacks . . . 40,000 people squeezed into a hundred acres of land. Can you farm families think about 40,000 people crammed into 100 acres of your land? Living in sub-human conditions; filth and degradation everywhere. And out of these shacks came mothers carrying corpses of the children who had died that night. And the class picked up the corpses of 17 children and make their way to the edge of town and dug a ditch. And into that ditch, side by side they laid 17 dead bodies. And as the priest

was saying the last rights, those American kids started to cry. Tears rolling down each and every face. And from somewhere within Anthony Campolo thought, “Cry on, kids, cry on.”

Blessed are they that weep. Blessed are they that mourn, for only the people whose hearts are broken by the things that break the heart of God can expect to be comforted by God.

And finally, today, blessed are the meek. I guess this needs to be a sermon in two parts. I just don't have the time for this whole passage today, but I want to get this in. Blessed are the meek. You know, as your Pastor, I see it as my job to get ordinary people stirred up to do the work of the Kingdom.

Get ahold of how important that is. You know, sometimes we think that the world is saved through superstars. If we could only get Billy Graham in here; if we could only get a great motivator, someone who could do for this church what Payton Manning did for the Indianapolis Colts. If we could only have the dynamic and fire of one of the disciples here, leading this church, things would turn around.

Folks, have you ever thought about the disciples? Were there ever such a bunch of klutzes as the disciples? There were Peter and Andrew, fishermen. And they weren't even very good fishermen, were they? They didn't even have a good set of nets. What are they doing each time we see them? They're mending their nets!

And then there's James and John, who were known in their own village as the Sons of Thunder. What would you have to do to get THAT kind of a nickname? Maybe they were the kind of people who wore leather robes with the sleeves cut off with intimidating slogans on the back, and rode donkeys painted with racing stripes.

How 'bout a tax collector—he would have been a collaborator with the occupying Romans; and he next to a violent revolutionary (remember Simon the Zealot), a midget named Zaccheus and a couple of ex-whores. These were superstars?

Friends, God is going to turn this church around, is going to turn this country around, through people like . . . you and me. Let's take the "like" you and me out of there. If God isn't going to work through you, and me, then He *just isn't going to DO IT*, is He? I want to tell you, the scripture wants to tell you, that God is not as honored by the superstars as He is by the meek and lowly you and me, as we take up our place in the Kingdom of our God.

There was a junior high camp (and you have to love Jesus to go to a junior high camp) filled with mean kids. [How do good kids individually get mean when they get in groups . . . away from home?] Anyway, each night a different cabin was responsible for devotions. Well, in this one cabin there was a spastic kid . . . a kid who was all twisted and couldn't even speak. And the nasty kids in that cabin said to this spastic kid, "OK, you're doing devotions tonight."

Well, they gathered, and all of them prepared to laugh and have fun, but that kid got up in front and it must have taken all fifteen minutes to say this, but he said, "I'm, here to tell you tonight that Jesus loves me." And then he sat down. And all the kids at that camp were silent. A couple of girls had tears running down their cheeks. And the Spirit moved, because God uses the lowly and God uses the meek. God uses the powerless to bring to naught the things that are.

How are you going to be used this week? How are you going to be the poor for Jesus? How are you going to find the one to mourn about, and about which you and I are forced to be the meek, and yet, and still, be able to do our lowly, loving best. In other words, how are we going to be the people of God's Kingdom until we see each other again?

May God give you and me a vision of His kingdom, and make us . . . make
US . .blessed--

Blessed that ours is the Kingdom of heaven

Blessed and comforted

Blessed and inheriting the earth.

Blessed to be an Amen in our world.

Amen.