

Counter Culture

Matthew 5.1-16

October 16, 2022

Do you think there is such a thing as privilege in our world today?

We haven't witnessed events recently where we are talking about privilege so let me clarify.

Do you believe that you are a person of privilege?

The question of privilege has surfaced in my life recently through listening to a podcast where one of the key stories was one of refugees. This story was outside the narrative we normally experience with the topic of privilege, and it caught my attention. It is outside the normal space of prejudice, hate or violence.

The message of privilege was more subtle. A family is forced to flee their home, they find a new home and now are not integrated in any way so much so that they have no idea what they will eat or when they will eat.

At this point in my life, this is what I have determined about privilege-defining privilege is like trying to hit a moving target and it is difficult to see if you have it. So, let's say it this way, if you do not have privilege it is easier to identify it.

Let me summarize:

If you can't see it (privilege), you have it.

If you do see it (privilege), you can't have it.

Dealing with privilege was nothing new to Jesus. He encountered "God's chosen people" almost daily. They experienced privilege in three primary areas.

1. Race.
2. Gender.
3. Family.

The privilege of the Jewish people was frustrating in that they had privilege, but they never were able for a sustained period to experience the fruit of privilege. Or at least the fruit they sought.

There hope for the Messiah was that they would assume their rightful place in the world and with that assume their rightful place of privilege and of power.

So this is the culture to which Jesus will teach. The crowd has gathered and He delivers The Sermon on the Mount.

The content of this message is subtle because it is early in Jesus' ministry. But the heart of the message of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount will never change. He starts with attitudes. Attitudes that ought to

shape the life of His disciples Listen to them and pick up on the counter cultural message to that of privilege and power.

Attitudes

- poor in spirit.
- those who mourn. As Jesus mourned for Jerusalem.
- those who are gentle.
- those who hunger for righteousness.
- those who are merciful.

These attributes are not the way of attaining power or privilege, yet it would be the way of Jesus.

When we learn to live with these attributes, we become salt and light.

The Apostle Paul may be able to help us see what Jesus is really talking about in this sermon.

Philippians 2.3-8

3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

5 In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in very nature[a] God,

did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

7 rather, he made himself nothing

by taking the very nature[b] of a servant,

being made in human likeness.

8 And being found in appearance as a man,

he humbled himself

by becoming obedient to death—

even death on a cross!

Have this same attitude, which is also in Christ Jesus.