

A Nice Place to Live

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[0 : 0 0] word are you familiar with the Meyer Briggs type indicator you know that personality trait diviner you answer some questions and they let you know whether you're an extrovert or an introvert whether you are sensing or intuiting whether you are thinking or feeling or whether you are judging or perceiving, these are various personality types and so after you do it you might end up as an INFP an ESTJ or an ISTP what they are quick to say is that one personality set is not better than another, it's just the way you understand why you think the way you do, why you might respond and why you might make the kind of decisions that you do it's pretty interesting if you've not done it and you know you can kind of really nail it anyway this same organization by the way back in 1998 did the first official random sample produced and what it produced was the actual ratio of introverts to extroverts in the United States and it's almost split right down the middle this was introverts 50.7% extroverts 49.3% now we could do a kind of unofficial survey here and I could ask you to raise your hand if you think you're an introvert but you'd be an introvert and you wouldn't raise your hand so we wouldn't have any real real understanding but there's somebody else who's done this kind of study for us even here in the UK and again it's kind of split right down the middle a study done in 2021 found that nearly evenly divided between introverts and extroverts with a heavier balance leaning toward introverts the point is that there are different personality traits and this is not a moral issue you're not more spiritual because you're an introvert or you're more spiritual because you're an extrovert for whatever reason that's just your personality tendency now why do I bring this up because I want to talk about something tonight that could have the power to close your introverted ears should you be among that 50% and the last thing I want to do is lose half of my listeners from the get-go so if you are an introvert

I need you to make a decision right now to not not listen I want to begin by touching briefly on the portion of scripture we read from Sermon on the Mount it's the language in which Jesus labels his disciples the light of the world and likens them to a city set upon a hill that can't be hidden or like a lamp that when it's lit is put on top of a stand so it gives light all around you are the light of the world a city set on a hill cannot be hidden nor do people light a lamp put it under a basket but on a stand and gives light to all the house then he goes on to say this 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 now if you are a disciple of Jesus with that language that I just read you have been commissioned by Jesus to be like a city set on a hill or a lamp on a lamp stand that is our mission the mission that all followers of Jesus are called to fulfill again what is your mission to let your light shine in a manner that provokes others to give praise to God now we might have missionaries that are uniquely called to the other parts of the world and Crow Road supports such people but there are also what we might call hometown missionaries hometown missionaries people who don't go off to the far flung lands but rather go about their daily lives right where they live and who are nonetheless commissioned by Jesus consider the setting of the Sermon on the Mount

Jesus is on a mount he's on the side of a hill there are people all gathered around as he's teaching them these various things and what happens when he's done they get up and they leave they were gathered and now they're scattered and where have they been scattered to back to their homes back to their neighborhoods back to their jobs and yet when they go back there's been a paradigm shift in their lives they're no longer just whoever they were returning from their everyday lives having heard some interesting teaching they are now missionaries that's you that's me that's any disciple of Jesus let your light shine before others so they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven that's the mission Jesus has put you and put me on now this idea of being on display for others this is nothing new this has always been part of God's gracious redemptive plan his plan to rescue the world from itself and we might call it the for the other aspect of being numbered among

God's people remember what he says to Abraham I will bless you and those who dishonor you I will curse and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed through you Abraham all the families of the earth shall be blessed and it was for Abraham as it was for Abraham so it was for Abraham's descendants for Israel I am the Lord I've called you in righteousness I've taken you by the hand and kept you I've given you as a covenant to the people a light to the nations to open the eyes that are blind to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon from the prison house those who sit in darkness and as it was for Israel so it was for the true Israel Jesus and given Jesus teaching from Matthew this pattern has not stopped we are as God's people an important instrument an instrument that God uses to bring glory to himself and as the Holy Spirit in us transforming us to be more and more like Jesus we shine as light in the world a light not intended to be hidden but as exposed as a city is on the side of a hill this brings glory to God and brings blessing to his people but it also clearly is intended to bring blessing to the people who are in proximity to God's people so here we are we're gathered here this evening only to be scattered across Glasgow when we leave we are on display to the nations to our neighbors with the intent of creating a desire among them to know the God whom we know now if you're an introvert

I might just have lost half of you it's possible that some of you introverts have been listening but have stopped hearing I mean talk of being scattered by Jesus to shed light brings to my notions of you know a bold witness for Jesus you're working your faith into every conversation you can't even pay for your bill at the restaurant without going God loves you now when I was a first Christian that meant that I was preaching on street corners which I did we stood on a ladder in the middle of New York City and preached on a street corner or we sat down next to someone in a park and you get do you know Jesus and get him into a conversation or at the very least you stand there and hand out this multitudinous amount of tracts now I'm not necessarily decrying such activity but it's most certainly the case that for many people this kind of light shedding is just not in their nature but God has given us a quieter way a quieter way a quieter way to be on display to be a city set on a hill that provokes envy that has people saying that seems like a nice place to live what I want to talk about is the missiological impact of God's people living according to God's law if you're taking notes it's a long sentence let me say that again the missiological impact of God's people living according to God's law and to do that

[8:17] I want us to consider this passage from Deuteronomy chapter 4 you might want to turn back there now what's the context of Deuteronomy chapter 4 Moses is recounting for the gathered people of Israel just prior to their entering the promised land the history of God's faithfulness towards Israel as well as the decrees the laws the commands that he had given them and so that they would be faithful to do them and now in this way he gets them ready to engage the nations they will encounter when they cross the Jordan into the land promised to their forefathers he reminds them how God dealt harshly with the generation that wandered in the wilderness he dealt harshly with them due to their participation for instance in Baal worship which included men having sex with women of Moab in a spiritual exercise for that God dealt with them harshly and they are put forward as an example my Moses of what they are not supposed to do when they enter the land see Israel was poised to cross over the Jordan and live among people who did not believe in the God of

Abraham Isaac and Jacob they had very different notions of what it meant to be spiritual what constituted justice or mercy so Moses reminds them that God had brought them out of Egypt to make them his own people he had remained faithful to his promise there was clearly no reason for them to go after other gods nonetheless he still needs the need to instruct them and in chapter 4 he offers a kind of preamble to the rest of the book now Israel listen to the statutes and the rules that I'm teaching you and do them that you may live go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God of your fathers is giving you you shall not add to the word that I command you nor take away from it that you keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you see I've taught you statutes and rules Moses says as the Lord enter as the Lord my God commanded me that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it keep them and do them for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of all the peoples who when they hear all these statutes will say surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people there it is that's a way for introverts for introverts and extroverts to truly be a city set upon a hill that can't be hidden to know the commands of God to not add to them to not take away from them and to do them for in the commands of

God is wisdom and understanding that rises above the wisdom and understanding of the nations that surround us our trust in that will be acknowledged by the nations we will stand out like a city set on a hill that can't be hidden and ultimately ultimately what is revealed in our obedience to God's commands which demonstrate superior wisdom and understanding ultimately what will be revealed is the person of God himself what does Moses say what other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near to us whenever we pray to him and what other nation is so great as to have such righteousness decrees and laws as the body of laws that I'm setting before you today one commentator observes this invites comparison Moses is ready to stand before the gathered people and say listen evaluate do your homework look at what has transpired and you'll have to come to the same assessment that I have what other nation has righteous laws and statutes like we have what other

God who when you call upon him answers so powerfully none this is what the history of God's dealings with Israel proclaims this is the people who God delivered out of Egypt they cried to him he sends Moses to lead them through mighty signs and wonders they're set free he parts the Red Sea brings them across the dry land he provides manna for them in the wilderness and there they are standing on the edge of the Jordan river ready to cross into that promised land is there any God out there that does what God does who can accomplish what God can accomplish no see Moses instructs Israel in the will of God he exhorts them to follow the will of God so that they literally and that they will live for in the will of God is wisdom and understanding that creates an enviable life an enviable life so much so that others will be drawn to it and when that happens when someone envies the life that you have the spirit the wisdom and understanding that you have when that person is drawn to it that's a perfect opportunity is presented to you to speak of the one who gave you such wisdom and understanding so what would prevent us what would prevent us from realizing this divinely desired goal in our lives

I'm going to suggest three things the first is ignorance of the law if following the law is what creates in us an enviable life a life that other people look at and say man I want to live like that then the first problem we have is ignorance of the law you can't follow it if you don't know it you cannot be a disciple if you don't know it Jesus says this all authority in heaven and earth has been given to me go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father Son and of the Holy Spirit and then teaching them to observe all that I've commanded you and behold I'm with you always to the end of the age we need to know the commands of God we need to know what it is that he says how we are supposed to live and that requires study it requires meditation Moses instructed Israel and Jesus the way Moses has instructed us and

[14 : 39] Jesus has instructed us and what they have given us are gifts gifts that we might take and hold and cherish in order that we might increase our capacity for living as we were created to live that's how we have been created to live in God's will and we have been redeemed by the grace of God to do what to live in God's will so we need to know the law can't be ignorant of it we don't know it we can't do it so it requires some study it requires meditation but God also in his grace has put people in your midst to help you to understand what it is that God requires you have a minister you have elders that are able to communicate to you well this is what God requires this is how it is that we've been created to live and they're striving to do it themselves and they encourage you how to do it God has put a local theologian in every congregation so that as we come across things within

God's word that we are confused by we don't understand or we feel like just overwhelmed with the expectation of it we go to others and we find out from those whom God has gifted to explain something to us that builds our faith that directs our hearts encourages us and it's really important that we're gathered here for instance this evening or Sunday morning because during our time with our fellow disciples what we do is we hear the word of God preached and so it's important that we pay attention when the Bible is read when instruction is given but don't just leave it to those times you have a Bible I'm sure each one of you owns a Bible and if you don't we have plenty to give away read your Bible know your Bible memorize your Bible let me let me comment you a small slim volume by R.C.

Sproul called Knowing Scripture it's a helpful book it talks about the various genres in the Bible it talks about how one part of the Bible relates to the other part of the Bible it's really very helpful and he's always very good at explaining things so you can pick that up just a thin volume and it will really aid you in knowing what's in God's law it will be a help to you because if we don't know it we can't do it and yet it's only by doing it that we develop an enviable life that others see so the first is ignorance of the laws our first problem our second problem might be our inherited distaste for the law yeah that just comes with the territory we are sons and daughters of Adam and Eve and they were given one command and they couldn't deal with it and now what happens is that all of us born just coming down that lineage we have an inherited distaste for the law of God we don't want to be told by God what to do in and of ourselves that's why it's so important that

God in his mercy and grace brings the Holy Spirit into our lives to dwell within us because it's in doing that that we actually create a love for God's law we desire it we want to know what it is remember what Jeremiah said behold the days are coming when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah not like the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand and brought them up out of the land of Egypt my covenant that they broke though I was their husband declares the Lord for this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days declares the Lord I will put my law within them and write it on their hearts I will be their God and they will be their people these are the days he says those will be the days these are the days the spirit dwells within us and the spirit is at work within us creating in us an ever increasing desire to know God's law and the capacity to actually do it and so the problem of this inherited distaste for the law

God has already anticipated that in us by giving us his Holy Spirit by bringing us by fulfilling this promise this prophecy that there will come a time when the law will be written on their heart so ignorance of the law is a problem inherited distaste for the law is a problem the first it's just getting into our Bibles and dealing with it just reading it and meditating upon it and studying it and finding answers that you need the second is this inherited taste and the third would be an inadequate understanding of the law's purpose an inadequate understanding of the law's purpose see we post reformation protestants we post reformation christians when we hear the word law we tend to think of the debate between law and grace of justification by works and justification by faith that's not the only lens through which we should consider the law because that casts the law in a negative light but the fact of the matter is that throughout the

[19 : 47] Old Testament and New Testament a member of the family of God is never without law it's true that one cannot be justified by the law and following the law is not a substitute for the grace of God without which we can't be saved but we should not make the mistake of thinking that God does not want us to be obedient to his commands and this is because of his love for us because in truth the law is freedom the law is freedom you know when a dancer is in a dance troupe and there's choreography that has been created for them in a ballet troupe or a modern dance company there's choreography and what do they do when they show up every day in the studio they're practicing this choreography over and over and over again until they just do it and so as one modern dance choreographer said you rehearse you practice until it becomes spontaneous that's what a musician does all those notes on the page all the notes were on the page and they learn all the notes and they learn how to play their instrument but what they want to do is get to a place where they make music and that's what the law does for us it tells us these are the confines of how it is that you live and you live within that confines and you're free in our church for about seven years

I created lessons for an intergenerational Sunday school that is all the ages were together from babies on up to the old folk and we were all in the same room and one of was that I set up a race course that went from here to here and what you had is you had one person and the only way you could go in this race course is if your feet went like this and your foot could not go further than a certain distance that is the toe could not go across where maybe where instep was well I had two people race against each other and it was great because you had little kids on the side just seeing whether they went too far or not but one person I tied a rope around their feet so they couldn't go any further than they were allowed to go and somebody else they didn't have that rope and they had to go did I go too far and every time they went too far they had to go back to the line but the person with the rope around their feet if

I'm creating the vision for this they were free they would go really fast because they knew they would never step beyond where they had to go that's what law does for us it brings freedom it tells us how we are to live and it's the same as it was for Israel it's the same for us as Jesus disciples listen again to what Moses says that knowing the law of God would do for God's people they would live they would walk in wisdom and understanding they would provoke envy in those around them and these are the same reasons that Jesus intimates when at the end of the sermon on the mount he talks about being built on a house being built on sand or built upon a rock everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock the rain came down the streams rose the winds blew beat against the house yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock but everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built

God gives us commands he gives us law so that we might know how we are to live and rather than thinking of it as something that is restrictive in the sense that it doesn't allow us to do things we really want to do well in one way you say yes because of our sinful nature there are things we really want to do that God says no no you can't do that but the reason he's telling us why we can't do that because he knows such things are harmful to us that's not how we were created to live God puts before us this is how you will live this is what will give you wisdom and understanding this is what will allow you to deal with the trials in life like a house built on a rock that when the storms come and take your time alright so the question what is your house built on what is your house built on when people observe us and they interact with us are we a house built upon the rock or are we a house built on sand what do

I mean let me offer a couple of examples do you grumble do you grumble and complain why does that what about that who what where what does Paul say do all things without grumbling or disputing that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world do you grumble do you complain David Paul Christian counselor says why do we grumble and complain because we think there is something unjust about our life how do we get a grip on grumbling so we can walk joyfully submitted to that command that Paul gives us we can remember we can learn God's sovereign we know he's just we know he loves us he desires only that we experience what it means to really live as we were created to live and so when the circumstances have been brought into our life that might cause us to grumble to complain we are we are we are supposed to tell ourselves come on we can do better than that

[26 : 01] God is working in us and he is saying let me work in your life to mold you into conformity with my vision for you you're going to feel freer than you have ever felt before in your life and what effect will that have on those around you listen to what Paulson suggests complaining characterizes our whole generation every generation everybody has bad role models on this issue because we live in the midst of a culture of dissatisfaction you're called to become someone so different that you shine imagine imagine a non complainer in an all complainers world imagine a patient large hearted person in a hothouse of petty disagreements and dissatisfactions imagine a constructive problem solver in the midst of all the grabbing for goodies imagine someone with good reasons for basic gratitude whose shining purpose comes from drinking at the well of God's grace what a radical change it would bring in the spheres in which we live when we are those who hear

God's command and we ask him for the grace of how we do the father so are you a grumbler don't grumble rather trust that God is at work in our life and the circumstances that right now are causing you to complain in fact there's something that he's designed so that we'll learn what it's like to trust him in all circumstances let me ask you another question Peter asks this in your hearts honor Christ the Lord is holy always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you yet do it with gentleness and respect let me ask you a question would anybody ask you of why you have hope hope I'm not just saying that to you I'm saying that to myself as well right what does it mean to have hope it means that in circumstances that are that are just dire at times yet nonetheless we have hope

I prayed earlier we think of brothers and sisters that are in difficult difficult places and they're in the midst of war what if there were Christians in the middle of that of the story they know where this is headed and they know that whatever happens to them here is not the final word on their existence they have a hope reserved for them in heaven that does not fade away and they live with that hope to the point of where somebody says why do you have that hope why is it that you can remain with a confidence that with all this chaos peace you seem to have a knowledge of something here that is different from my calculations it doesn't add up for me but it seems to add up for you so we don't want to be grumblers and we want to be people who to those around us look and say this person has something else going on in their life that allows them to respond differently to a circumstance that others are responding so we're gathered here and soon we're going to be scattered and this is the plan on the part of our master it's not an option for us we are a city set upon a hill that cannot be hidden this is

Jesus plan for his disciples they ought to be on display unavoidably on display and this makes the introverts among us very uncomfortable and as the researchers tell us that society is split down about the middle between introverts and extroverts that means that there's a good chance 50% of Jesus disciples are not thrilled with the plan but it's the master's plan and we all have to get on board and one thing that will help is to understand that being on display for Jesus is not the same thing as being in one mannequin in one of the shops along that Buchanan high street shopping area Jesus doesn't place us like mannequins in a window inviting people to stop and stare his interest runs much deeper than marketing what he displays are the new lives the new lives of those whom he has brought to God through the reconciling power of the cross these are lives that are being renewed and shaped to the will of

God by the Holy Spirit wisdom and understanding and hope bearing fruit to his glory one commentator on Deuteronomy says this what Moses instructions to Israel taught was that quote mission is not a matter of going but of being not a matter of going but of being to be what they were to live as people of the God of Israel in the sight of the nations since this is the case it doesn't matter whether we're an introvert or an extrovert what's going to make the difference is our knowledge and love of God's will and our desire to have it mold us shape us and the person we will become will be one who will stand out not because we're we feel comfortable telling jokes or we can quickly start a conversation with strangers we'll stand out whether introvert or extrovert because in the sight of the peoples we will possess wisdom and understanding that comes from knowing and being conformed to the will of

[31 : 53] God and when Jesus speaks as he does about his disciples being a very visible city there's no might be about it it's what we are so if Moses is correct being faithful to pursue the will of God in our lives will make us a place not only seen by those around us but actually envied by those around us it'll look like a nice place to live that's what God calls us to that's what he brings his will into our life so that we will know it but not only that he empowers us to carry it out we want to be as a church as individuals a nice place to live