

Day 1 - Morning Study

Read: Matthew 5:14-16

Back in November 1988, President Ronald Reagan said, “It’s the American vision of creating a new nation of free people, a country that would be a light unto the nations, and a shining city upon a hill.” He was referencing Jesus comments in Matthew 5:14, but this reference goes further back in the American story than President Reagan. The Puritan leader, Pastor John Winthrop, described the Puritan settlement as a “city on a hill” in his sermon titled “A Modell of Christian Charity,” written in 1630. He emphasized that the whole world would be watching to see if they were truly following God. All of their success or failure would hinge on how they followed Christ. If they followed Christ, then God would bless their efforts. But if they did not follow Christ, they would lose God’s blessing and be failures. They did well, and they were blessed.

From the time the Pilgrims and Puritans arrived on the shores of Massachusetts Bay in the early 1600s, America has been a beacon of freedom to the world. We have not always been perfect-no nation has been because every nation is made up of fallen, imperfect people. But when a nation truly follows God and makes Christ their King, they can be a light to a world in darkness.

In John 8:12, Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Jesus is the source of our light. We as a nation are called to be a light to the world. Our heritage as Americans is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to a world in darkness. And this world is becoming more lost. It needs you to shine the light of Jesus Christ.

This week, we will be studying the principles from some of the sermons that shaped a country and a revolution.

This week, our Bible X will use principles from five sermons that predate the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The formation of the Declaration is based on more than just political ideas. It was formed in the pulpits of the churches and through the teachings that stirred the First Great Awakening. The idea of this land as a “city on a hill” dates back to John Winthrop in 1630. It was the pursuit of religious freedom and the ability for these settlers to live their lives as they believed God wanted them to. How different would our country be today if we strived to live our lives that same way?

Group Study

“A Modell of Christian Charity” by John Winthrop

John Winthrop wrote this sermon while on board the Arbella heading to Massachusetts Bay in 1630.

God Designed Us to Need Each Other

Winthrop taught that differences among people were intentional so that we would rely on one another and that everything belongs to God, so we should use our talents and wealth to care for each other.

Read: Ezekiel 16:17

God is speaking to His people through Ezekiel. Whose gold and silver does He claim it is?

It is God who gave them their jewels, gold, and silver. It was his blessing.

What do they do with the gold?

They made it into idols and worshiped them.

Read: Proverbs 3:9-10

What are we supposed to do with our wealth?

Honor the Lord with our wealth and our first fruits. Explain what first fruits are. Also, a good discussion point: can our intellect be considered the first fruits? Using our talents and our intellect to help ministries or to share the gospel can be a way of using our first fruits.

During the time of Jesus, farming and raising animals were the standard industry. Today, it is knowledge and technical skills. Don't be limited to just giving money or volunteering your time. How can you use your mind for God?

What is the significance of giving God our first fruits?

It is about giving him our best.

Read: 1 Corinthians 10:26

Who does Paul say the earth belongs to?

The earth is the Lord's.

Read: Galatians 6:2

How does carrying one another's burdens fulfill the law of Christ?

Love one another as I have loved you. See the next question for continued emphasis.

Read: John 13:34-35

What is the new commandment that he gives the disciples?

Love one another as I have loved you. Our love is to be more open and visible to the world. It is to be different, and it should make others want what we have. Is that how we really act? Why not?

What is the significance of this new commandment?

That all people will know we follow Christ.

Read: Mathew 6:19-21

What is Jesus saying in this passage?

We are to focus on following Christ, that is where our true treasure lies.

Where are you storing your treasure?

This is a good question to help the boys begin to reflect on themselves. We will have more throughout the week.

Brotherhood Requires Sacrifice

Christian love is not just words. It requires giving, helping, forgiving, and sacrifice. Brotherhood means putting others ahead of yourself.

Read: 1 John 3:16-18

What are we to do?

Lay down our lives for our brothers. How can we lay down our lives for others? Sometimes, it is harder to lay down our lives in small sacrifices than to truly die for someone.

Why are we to show love through actions and truth?

Action and truth are more powerful than mere words.

Read: Philippians 2:3-4

How are we to view our own interests and the interests of others?

We are to put others' interests ahead of our own.

What is humility, and why are we to do this with it?

We want to give the glory to God.

Read: John 15:13

What is the greatest love we can show?

This is to continue the point of sacrificing for others. Our country is only good when we work to live like Christ. Our country is failing because we are selfish and not selfless.

Do you truly live like Christ, or are you living for yourself?

We act more like the world and less like Christ.

Christians Represent God to the World

We are to be God's messengers to this world. We are to be his ambassadors.

Read: 1 Peter 2:12

How are we to act around people who don't believe?

We are to be honorable so that they may see our good deeds.

Read: Philippians 2:14-16

How are we to "do all things"?

Even when the world is crooked and evil, we are to do all things without complaining.

Read: Matthew 7:12

What is Jesus telling us to do here?

Love others as well as you love yourself.

Read: Matthew 5:43-48

How are we to treat our enemies?

Christ calls us to go further than what the world requires. We are to love others like God does, even to the point of loving our enemies. Remember, we were all enemies of God, and he still sent His son for us.

Read: Matthew 5:14-16

What are we supposed to be a light to?

We are a light to the world. I believe God gave Winthrop a small vision of what could be in this new world. God had started moving in the hearts of our founders long before the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Winthrop warned that the world would watch how Christians lived in the United States. We can choose to either be a light or to join the darkness. Pray that you will be the light in a dark world.