Veterans Day - suicides

* **Weekender Slide**
* **Series Slide**
* India’s capital is New Dehli.

And they have a severe smog problem.

When I say severe, I mean, deadly.

Air pollution is measured in Particle Matter. PM for short.

The particles that tend to be really harmful are called PM2.5.

These are the really fine particles that are less than 2.5 microns in diameter. Meaning, they are invisible to the human eye.

Ingesting too many of these particles can lead to asthma, heart attakcs, reduced lung function, …since many of these particles are carcinogens…breathing them in can lead to cancer…and certainly premature death.

Any level of PM2.5 in the air that is above 50 (*micrograms per cubic meter*) is considered extremely dangerous.

So let me give you some annul averages of PM2.5 levels of world cities for perspective.

Los Angeles- 11

Tokyo- 15

London- 15

Beijing, China- averages 85

New Delhi- averages 122

Remember, anything over 50 is extremely hazardous.

And 122 is Dehli’s AVERAGE PM2.5 level.

Recently, that level has spiked.

On November 8th, (that was Wednesday of last week), Dehli’s PM2.5 level was 833. That’s over 16 times the safe limit.

Schools are out. People are being told to stay inside. But a large number of Delhi’s 19 million people either live or work outside…so there is no shelter for them.

It's a major crisis.

Apparently, these spikes happen every year when farmers burn the leftovers of their crops in the northern Indian states. Those particles fill the air along with all the traffic smog and create a deadly situation.

But the thing about smog…is that it kills you slowly and silently. At first, its irritable eyes and a cough. But you can’t see its cumulative effect until its too late. Until the damage is done years later.

I want to share with you an editorial article from an Indian newspaper. The author is upset because, as he sees it, no one seems to be doing anything about the problem.

Even though its costing people their lives, the farmers keep burning crops because its profitable. And the states refuse to wrok together because of political differences.

In other words, because their attention is on politics and economics…many of the people who CAN do something about the problem remain apathetic about it…even though its an undeniable problem.

Here’s what this author said about it. (Put all highlighted material on the same slide if possible)

* **“Delhi's silent capitulation to fate is a painful indictment of its inability to stand up for its own rights. It is a reminder of the zombie-like existence of a city that doesn't stop even once to introspect about its own fate. … Delhi has lost the heart and stomach for a fight for its own existence.**
* **Where did the Delhi that once fought for itself and others go?**

**How could the people of a city be so blase about their own existence? …**

**The only plausible explanation is that they seem to have accepted this deadly smog as *fait accompli*, an unavoidable part of their lives that can't be cured so has to be endured.” –Sandipan Sharma**

THAT is a great description of deadly apathy.

Title Slide: **“Deadly Apathy: How to Stop Breathing in the Smog of Sin- Mark 9:42-50”**

A zombie-like existence that doesn’t stop to introspect about its own fate.

Losing the heart and stomach for a fight for its own existence.

Accepting the smog as an unavoidable part of their lives that can’t be cured…just endured.

The way this Newspaper editor talks about the smog in Delhi…is the way Jesus talks about our apathy toward sin.

* **Mark 9:42–50**

**“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”**

**TRANSITION:** We all have ways of reacting to our sin like the citizens of Delhi are reacting to the smog. Just sort of accepting it in our lives as a *fait accompli* that has no hope for a cure…

…and so we live a sort of zombie like existence…

an apathetic and silent capitulation to fate…that this is just the way we are.

Jesus has a different view. First…

**1) Taking Jesus seriously means taking sin seriously.**

* + This passage is about discipleship.
  + Jesus is giving instructions TO his disciples. He is further clarifying what it means to follow him.
  + And, don’t forget, that this is still the conversation he has with them after he announced to them that he was going to suffer and die, and rise again….and then they had an argument about who was the greatest.
  + Also… this is still the turning point of the book of Mark.
  + See, there were 2 sort of conflicting OT prophecies about the Messiah. ONE was from the book of Daniel… about this powerful conquering Son of Man that would triumph over Israel’s enemies.
  + The other was from the prophet Isaiah, about a suffering servant who would humbly die for Israel.
  + The first half of the book of Mark is about showing Jesus as that powerful divine Son of Man.
  + And at the half-way point of the Mark’s gospel, the disciples get it. They confess that Jesus is that person
  + BUT, then Jesus start talking about dying. About being the suffering servant that Isaiah talks about.
  + And the disciples can’t believe him. They can’t believe that the Son of Man could also be the Suffering Servant.
  + They do their fair share of rebuking Jesus…or blowing him off even when he tells them straight up that HE IS GOING TO SUFFER AND DIE.
  + Here in this middle part of the book of Mark, before Jesus starts his trek toward Jerusalem to die, there are these series of conversations *with* and teachings *to* his disciples NOT ONLY about Jesus suffering and death…but about the call for all of Jesus’ disciples to suffer and die for the sake of the Kingdom of God.
  + So we aren’t dealing with Jesus randomly pulling out some teaching about sin and hell.
  + This is Jesus STILL confronting the disciples’ misunderstanding of what SALVATION means. Of what greatness is. He is trying to shift their idea of SUCCESS away from the short term…and TOWARD the eternal.
  + He is trying to show them why its better to give your life for the Kingdom of God…than it is to try and rise to the top of society and reign for the short term.
  + Jesus is showing them things that SEEM to be significant…are not in the grand scheme of the eternity.
  + AND…he is showing them that things they AREN’T paying attention to…actually have ETERNAL IMPORTANCE.
  + Lets start w **v 41**
  + Just before this Jesus holds a little kid in his arms, and he says positively- If you welcome the very least of this world…those at the bottom, the outcast…even if you give a cup of cold water...you may think “That’s not a big deal, that doesn’t have anything to do with the Kingdom of God” …But Jesus says, “No, even that cup of cold water to a child has a POSTIVE ETERNAL IMPACT.
  + NOW in **v 42**, he is talking about the negative side of that.
  + Instead of welcoming the least of my disciples, if, by your words or actions you cause someone who has the smallest amount of faith in me to sin…you may think, “That's not a big deal.” BUT, Jesus says, its better to have a millstone hung around your neck…because the eternal consequences of that are worse.
  + In other words, Jesus is saying, “I know you think that your sin is bad. The problem is, you don’t recognize HOW damaging it is.”
  + Its just like the smog in Dehli. Its not that the people there don’t think the smog is bad. Rather, its that they don’t realize HOW BAD it is.
  + You know, drowning in the sea is one of the great fears of a first century Jew. Because the sea was so unknown. Remember when the disciples were out on a boat in a storm? They freaked out. They thought they were going to drown.
  + Jesus is painting a picture of sin here that is ANYTHING BUT silent capitulation. It demands anything BUT apathy.
  + He’s saying, “The consequences of causing someone else to sin, is worse than your worse fear. Why are’nt you vigilant about it?”
  + **V 43-47**
  + Sin is so serious, so eternally impactful….
  + …that its better to do something drastic…cut off a hand, a foot, gouge out an eye…
  + …than it is to keep on sinning.
  + …To keep on breathing in the smog.
  + **V 42**
  + The first thing Jesus points out about sin…is not about its personal effects…but about its effects on other people.
  + In other words, Jesus’ message doesn’t start with “Alright, think about how you can get to heaven!”
  + No, it starts with, “Look how damaging your sin is to others. “whoever CAUSES one of these little ones to sin”
* **Back to 1)**
  + **Let me give you an example of this.**
  + Right now, there are scads of accusations going around Hollywood, and Washington DC regarding sexual assault.
  + Many of those have to do with a powerful actor or politician who has been accused of taking advantage of a minor by using their influence or power.
  + …and some of the defense I hear goes like this.
  + “That was years ago. Decades. I’m a different person now.”
  + or…
  + “Oh, that wasn’t a big deal. I learned my lesson. Or that was locker room talk.”
  + Do you hear it? The concern there is for the state of alleged perpetrator. Not the vicitim.
  + It minimizes what the alleged offense is…and thinks only about the person who sinned…not about what happened to the person who was sinned against.”
  + And I can’t think of anything more devastating, anything that would “cause a little one who believes in me to sin” more than sexual abuse from a person of authority and power.
  + That hurts and twists the understanding of a persons view of themselves, of God, of authority, of sex, of right and wrong.
  + …and when we minimize it. When we ask people to “get over it because it happened a long time ago.”…well, Jesus doesn’t say, “Its better to have a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to sin…UNLESS IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO.”
  + No, he says, you are taking this WAY TOO LIGHTLY.
  + Let me ask you this.
  + You may not be a sexual predator. Ok. Maybe that’s true.
  + But are you having sex outside of marriage. If so, you are damaging that other person, consent or not. You are damaging yourself too…but Jesus says think first about those whom you are causing to sin.
  + Parents. Are you modeling laziness and apathy about God in your home by never talking about Jesus. Never reading the Bible. Never praying with your kids.
  + You are causing them to stumble. You are setting them up to run from God, not run to him.
  + …and there’s a millstone next to your easy chair.
  + …there’s a Thick north Indian smog in your kitchen.
  + Employer…Are you putting pressure on your employees to work…and not rest?
  + Employees- are you consuming yourself with work and neglecting your family or your church family?
  + You are hurting them. You are leading others to sin.
  + You don’t think it's a big deal. Jesus says, “Its an eternal deal. Take it seriously.”
  + To take Jesus seriously IS to take sin seriously.
  + To be a disciple IS to root out sin. NOT to harbor it.
* **TRANSITION:** Now, the question is…exactly what are you supposed to do about sin.
* **2) Pay attention to what you do, where you go, and what you think.**
  + In Dehli, there are specific instructions for people when the PM2.5 levels rise.
  + They are to go inside, where the air is filtered.
  + They are supposed to avoid being out during the evenings’ when its worse…and to use some sort of gas mask or filtering device (even if its just a scarf) on their face if they have to go out.
  + When Jesus uses these 3 body parts here, they show us 3 ways that we sin.
  + **V43**
  + **First he says if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off.**
  + Ok, I want you to know that this is hyperbole.
  + The hand represents action.
  + You can read all through the Scripture about God’s hand.
  + It always represents his action. What he does.
  + Same thing here.
  + Your hand represents your outer actions.
  + This is the most obvious of our sin. Its what most of us jump on and identify right off the bat. When we talk about sin, we typically talk about something we DID. An action we took.
  + So Jesus says, Pay attention to what your hand is doing. To the actions you are taking. If you see sin happening there…don’t be apathetic. Do something about it. Make a decision. That sin is VERY SERIOUS…and it has eternal impact.
  + I don’t know how many people I’ve talked with who have confessed some sort of continual pornography use to me.But it is A LOT.
  + So one of the first things I say is “How are you accessing it?”
  + Typically it's a phone or computer.
  + So I say, alright lets start by getting rid of the wifi in your home.
  + Or how about getting a flip phone.
  + And you know what I usually get back?
  + “Oh, I can’t do that. I have to have wifi.”
  + Why?
  + **“**Well, how will people contact me?”
  + **“**they can call you.”
  + But, I need it for work.
  + “Go to a coffee shop.”
  + “That’s inconvenient.”
  + And see, right there…that’s where you know you are just accepting the deadly smog of your sin as a fait accompli…just something that’s always going to be there…even though you know its twisting you…and killing you.
  + Are you really willing to be thrown into hell for WORK EMAIL?
  + For Twitter?
  + For Snapchap?
  + For Instagram?
  + Jesus says, cut your hand off…and we say, “But I’m gonna need to use that later.”
  + **Listen, pay attention to your outward actions…and have others who love you but aren’t afraid to challenge you…pay attention to them too. They matter eternally.** And when you find your hand is causing you to sin…CUT IT OFF.
  + **V 45**
  + Next Jesus says, pay attention to your feet.
  + Of course, this is about where you go.
  + Where do your feet carry you?
  + What environments do you find yourself in?
  + What people do you find yourself around and for what reasons?
  + YES. Jesus definitely ate with tax collectors and prostitutes.
  + Jesus definitely associated with sinners.
  + That’s not what this is about.
  + He didn’t PAY prostitutes and get into bed with them, so that he could talk about the Kingdom of God.
  + **“Don’t sit near the fire if your head is made of butter.”- Martin Luther**
  + In other words, know what might tempt you to sin…and know what might tempt others to sin…and be careful little feet where you go.
  + Now, listen to me.
  + This can easily turn into self-righteousness…which Jesus VEHEMENTLY condemned.
  + Self-righteousness says “I don’t associate with THOSE people, because they are bad and I am good and they will tarnish my image.”
  + That’s a person saying “I am strong and you are weak.”
  + But, Jesus is saying, “Admit how you are weak. Admit that you aren’t strong enough to go into the bar…because you are prone to getting drunk. Admit that you are too weak to watch that movie…because you are prone to lust.”
  + Not only that, remember, that as disciples of Jesus we are thinking first about our neighbor. So the question of where I go isn’t just about “Is there sin or temptation here for me?” Its also about, ‘If I go to this bar, or movie, or meet up with this person, OR spend the night at my girlfriends house (even though we’re not sleeping in the same bed)…is there possible temptation for someone else that I could hurt.
  + See, self righteousness says, “I don’t go there because it my tarnish my reputation”.
  + But discipleship says, LOVE SAYS, “I don’t go there because I’m weak…or because someone I love is weak…and I want to push them to Christ, not away from Christ.”
  + **V 47**
  + **Third, the eye.**
  + This isn’t just about what you see.
  + The eye represents the portal for what comes in.
  + It represents the way you see the world.
  + Jesus is always talking about seeing in terms of understanding. How do you think about something.
  + So, when we talk about gouging out the eye, YES, it certainly represents being careful about what you see…
  + …but more importantly…about what you THINK.
  + **…about your patterns of thought and what is shaping those.**
  + Let me give you an example.
  + One of our pastors here, some time ago, was helping a person who was going through a very difficult time in his marriage.
  + A wife had left a husband and he came to this pastor and said.
  + “I gotta be honest with you, I’m trying to figure out how to hit the easy button this.”
  + The EASY button, in case your not familiar, is a marketing campaign from STAPLES office supply.
  + The idea is, that when you get in a tough situation…(I suppose you run out of copy paper or something)…that you hit this big red easy button and…VOILA…problem solved!
  + Obviously, this guy had not been deeply studying Staples commercials. But, in a difficult time, his thought was not something Jesus said about marriage (we’ll cover that next week)…it was something some marketers on Madison Avenue had inveneted in order to sell office supplies.
  + It was a consumeristic response to suffering…understandable…sure…but what had happened was that guy had absorbed a message. Commercial by commercial by commercial…ad after ad, joke after joke…he had absorbed this idea that life was short…and problems should be solved the easiest way possible.
  + **THAT IS THE EXACT OPPOSITE of what Jesus was teaching.**
  + That life is eternal, and suffering is going to happen.
  + See, he had breathed in the smog. Apathetically absorbed whatever came to his eye…rather than intentionally develop a discipline of putting the WORD OF GOD in front of his eyes.
  + And that shaped the way he thought about the world. And it was contrary to what Jesus said.
  + If Jesus suffered and died on a cross…the easy button doesn’t exist.
  + To quote the Dread Pirate Roberts from the Princess Bride, “Life is Pain, your highness. Anyone who tells you differently is selling something.”
  + Listen. Throw your TV out. Take a hammer to your video games. Destroy your music playlist… if those things shape your worldview more than the Bible.
* **Back to 2)**
  + If Jesus is serious here. Then there are probably a thousand things that we think are no big deal…that actually have eternal consequences. Lets find them, and with joy, root them out of our lives.
* **Transition:** Ok. There is something VERY IMPORTANT to realize here.
* Its this. That all of this talk of fleeing sin, killing sin, recognizing its gravity. If you lose the context…you lose everything.
* Remember. The context is FOLLOWING JESUS.
* The context is hearing that Jesus died and resurrected.
* The context is understanding the powerful Son of Man becoming the suffering servant on a cross.

If you forget that, you end up managing sin.

If you forget that, you end up either with some level of success where you feel self-righteous…or you end up failing miserably in temptation and you feel terrible about yourself.

BUT, if you see who Jesus is…if you see what his cross and resurrection means…you’ll be more bold, more courageous than ever before about sin and temptation…and suffering. Because…

**3) Disciples don’t avoid fire. They walk into it salty.**

* + Don’t forget. This is a message to Jesus’ disciples.
  + Jesus is preparing them to understand his work as a savior who would suffer and die…and therefore, as his disicples, preparing them for the fact that they would also suffer and die.
  + But Jesus’ message wasn’t “Therefore be afraid.”
  + No. It was THEREFORE…take courage. Take Heart. Be encouraged. DON’T BE AFRAID.
  + Something that struck me about that editorial in that Indian newspaper about the smog
  + When the author said,
  + **Delhi's silent capitulation to fate is a painful indictment of its inability to stand up for its own rights.**
  + Now, generally, Jesus isn’t about his disciples standing up for their rights. Jesus disciples give away their rights for others.
  + Except for one.
  + There is one right, that if fought for, contended for, dwelt on, delighted in…that actually is the impetus, the motivation for giving away all our other rights.
  + Unfortunately, Christians are known more for fighting for their American rights, or political rights, or right to free speech or own guns.
  + Thile all those rights may be fine and good…
  + …we often go after defending those rights while we let the most important one slip through our fingers.
  + **John 1:12**
  + **But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God**,
  + The right to become children of God.
  + That doesn't come from avoiding sin. It doesn’t come from being perfect. It comes from belielving in Jesus’ name.
  + That right to be a child of God doesn’t come from you managing your sin better.
  + It comes from Jesus’ death in your place.
  + On the cross, Jesus was the suffering servant from Isaiah.
  + And when he died…he was going into the fires of hell. He was experiencing being cut off from his own kingdom.
  + He, the true Son of Man…the True son of God…was being cut off from his Father..in order to give us…the right to call God our father.
  + And that is independent of what you did for him.
  + See, the motivation to kill sin doesn’t come from seeking reputation. It doesn't even come from simply not wanting to hurt others.
  + It is an act of gratitude toward a God who already took the hell our sin deserves. Who already plunged himself into the sea of God’s wrath…so that we could have life in the Kingdom of God.
  + And now…as a disciple…I don’t seek the easy button. I don’t seek a way out of suffering. I don’t seek to please myself.
  + Instead…claiming my right as God’s child, because of JESUS…now, I gladly offer everything I am as an offering of gratitude to the Lord.
  + And that’s what this salt thing is all about.
  + **V 48**
  + What does it mean to be salted with fire?
  + Well Jesus is using a little play on words.
  + He talks about the unquenchable fires of hell.
  + The destructive nature of a worm eating a decomposing body. And fire that continualy consumes.
  + **V 49-50**
  + Then, still using fire as a picture…he throws in the idea of salt.
  + Salt is a preservative.
  + And…while fire destroys..it also purifies.
  + If you have a metal that is impure with tiny particles of lesser metal…you burn it. To burn away the impurity and leave the gold.
  + **So that what comes out is GOLD.**
  + What Jesus is saying is that if your trust is in him, if you have the right to be a child of God because of Jesus…then the suffering and death that comes into your life will only purify you…
  + You know what this salt is?
  + **Leviticus 2:9 & 13**
  + **And the priest shall take from the grain offering its memorial portion and burn this on the altar, a food offering with a pleasing aroma to the LORD.**
  + **“You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing** **from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.** (ESV)
  + See before you could offer a grain offering to God..a food offering…you had to season it
  + Just like we season our food as we cook it so it tastes better, so the grain offerings and food offerings commanded in the Old Covenant were salted.
  + And in Leviticus, the original covenant, God said DO NOT LET THE SALT OF THE COVENANT be missing.
  + Without the salt, the offering is not pleasing to the Lord.
  + Jesus came saying, “I’m brining the Kingdom. I’m bringing New Creation. And I’m doing it through a NEW COVENANT.
  + A covenant that doesn’t depend on you making the right sacrifices. A covenant that doesn’t depend on how good you are.
  + This is a covenant that I keep for you.
  + This is a covenant where I am the offering.
  + I am burned.
  + My life is an aroma pleasing to God FOR YOU.
  + See, Jesus is the salt of the New Covenant. That enables all of our obedience to God to not be tainted by our sin…but to be a sweet aroma to him.
  + When I choose to serve Jesus, to obey him because I remember his covenant with me….with us…with his church…
  + …then my offering is pleasing to the Lord.
  + **V 49-50**
  + Its interesting. The smog spike in Dehli was caused largely year after year by farmers burning their crops.
  + But our offering to God, if its salted with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ…is a sweet smelling aroma to God.
  + Every decision you make to run to him and away from temptation, to die and give yourself away for someone else to know him…if it flows from your position as a redeemed child of God…then the salt of the covenant is all over tahat sacrifice.
  + But if you leave the salt out. If its missing. It becomes just the stench of your own self-righteousness.
* **Back to 3)**
  + So Jesus says, Have salt among yourselves…be at peace with one another, so that in all the temptation to sin…in all the fires and trial that are going to come your way…you won’t be afraid.
  + IN fact, if your salty, covered in the righteousness of Christ…there won’t be a fire that you ever have to run from.
  + Suffering can’t destroy you….it can only make you a wonderful offering to God.

Here’s my question to you

* + Are you in a zombie like existence regarding sin?
  + Are you apathetic?
  + Don’t cut sin out of your life to impress God.
  + **Cut sin out of your life because God has impressed you.**