

Salt and Light

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Matthew 5:13-16 (NIV) - *You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

In Jesus times, 1st Century, there is a lot of frustration and dissatisfaction with faith, religion, and spirituality. Why? The religious leaders, rabbis, preachers spoke in footnotes and showed little genuine love. They spoke in footnotes. This teacher says. That rabbi says.

More than that, the faith community showed little love! And religion and spirituality were very burdensome. Instead of lifting the burdens from people, religion blasted people for not doing it right. For not getting it right. For not being right. This can even happen in the best of churches. All of us can slip into patterns that are burdensome.

Instead of compassion, you give complaints.

Instead of pointing out potential, we point a finger at your problems.

Instead of loving, they lord, instead of grace, they grumble.

Run far away from any teaching, any church, or any group of religious legalists that burden, instead of bless, because **it will certainly diminish your potential to be salt and light.**

1Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: **2**"The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.**3**So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. **4**They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. (Matt 23-NIV)

But not with Jesus. He came announcing that His Father loved all, and he spoke with such authority and love that people would travel for miles, sit for hours, endure the Mediterranean heat to listen to the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Jesus' teaching was plain. Jesus' teaching was practical. Jesus' teaching was possible.

God saw a world spinning out of control. He knew they had no ability to reverse the south-bound-gravitational pull that sin had on them, so he sent Jesus Christ into a little family.

In an unlikely place.

Born to some peasant parents.

In a prophetic place called Bethlehem.

Mary gave birth to Jesus with love.

They moved back to Galilee and taught him the faith of the day.

Joseph and Mary sensed that this was a special child.

A special boy. A special young man.

Then Jesus began to preach. He taught with power from heaven. He healed like no other. He faced injustice and put it in its place. Stood injustice, on its ear. And he loved with an unconditional and grace-filled love like never seen before. Or seen since.

Then Jesus Christ died a substitutionary-atoning death, for your pile of sins, and my pile of sins. And my pile of sins were Everest-like in size. When I was swinging in the universe from one trapeze to the next, in self-centered living and lust, suddenly I slipped and fell with no hope of a safe landing, Jesus caught me before I broke into all kinds of little pieces.

Medicine is about dosage. Too little, nothing happens. Too much damage to your organs. Jesus Christ comes on the scene and offers you the perfect dosage of his grace and forgiveness, for your ailment; that ails you!

Jesus loved me. Forgave me. And set me in a community of faith that would show me what it means to be a Christ follower. It all started when I

surrendered my life to Christ. When I turned over control. When I let Jesus be the leader of my life.

Here is a bible verse that got the process going for me some 4 decades ago. *God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us (on our behalf), so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:21-NIV)*

He not only forgave my sins, Jesus abolished sins effects, and sent shame and guilt scurrying into another reality. In fact, the effects of my sins and your sins that are atoned for, have been banished from the universe all together.

Now, my favorite verses in the bible that prove the reality of this effect, are found in Psalm 103:3 and Psalm 103:12.

Now, let's look at the first. Jesus not only forgives your sins, but He also heals all your diseases, and redeems your life from the pit....*who forgives all your sins and heals your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit. (Psalm 103:3-4-NIV)*

God not only cares about your salvation, but He also cares about your sickness.

He not only solves your problem through atonement, but He also solves the problem of your anxiety.

Jesus not only offers redemption from sin, but He also offers rescuing from sickness. *Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8)*

Jesus not only heals our bodies, but he also removes sins effect and casts its evil consequences into the outer regions of the galaxy. **Oh, you have never heard of this benefit.** For star and galaxy lovers, here is a very cool verse, with supernatural benefits.

As far as the eastern horizon is from the west, so he removes the guilt of our rebellious actions from us. (Psalm 103:12-NET)

Let that sink in. I have never recovered from this reality, that when I meet my maker, as the country music world sings, I will be free from my sin's effects of

guilt and shame. How about you? Have you experienced that kind of love? That kind of forgiveness? That kind of cosmic supernatural benefit?

Ours is a living faith. Ours is a loving faith. Ours is a lasting faith, that will carry you right into eternity.

Today, in Wichita, Kansas and around the world, Jesus continues to invite followers, like those at the Sea of Galilee in our text,

...to renounce sin,

...to be rescued from sins consequences of death, and to join in Jesus movement,

...join in Jesus' ministry,

...join in Jesus' kingdom as a redeemed from sin follower of Christ.

And for some of you sitting here today, this is what you have been searching for. Longing for. Looking for.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21-NIV)

In Matthew 5, Jesus is making a statement about those who are in the kingdom of God and telling us how to experience an inner state of satisfaction, inner peace, joy filled living and the fulfillment of God's promises and blessings for their lives.

And we pick up our story, at the Sea of Galilee, on a hill overlooking this pristine glassy blue Lake, that goes for several names. Lake Gennesaret. Sea of Tiberius. And the most famous Sea of Galilee. Let's join Jesus with the sermon in progress. Jesus is introducing what the cost is to follow him.

If you want to experience all the benefits, favor, and flavor of the king, then you must be a kingdom, Christian. Not a Kansas Christian. Not a carnal Christian. A Christ follower doing the Kings work. Joyfully. And without complaint.

The Sermon on the Mount is the longest sermon(s) that Jesus ever taught.

This is the longest sermon that Jesus ever delivered. It was given on the northern slope of the Sea of Galilee. The intent behind the sermon, is to learn

and live out what it means to be a sincere and sacrificial follower of Christ. No looky-loos here. No kick the tires, kind of Christianity.

Jesus teaching at the Sea of Galilee in chapter 5, answers the question:

What does it mean to be a fully devoted follower of Christ? Not a weekend worshipper. Not a hail Mary prayer, when things get tough. Not Christmas and Easter gatherer to soothe the conscience. Our series, answers the penetrating question, **what does it mean to really follow this Jesus Christ?**

These verses we read a few minutes ago, are tied to the preceding verses, in Matt 5:1-12. The Sermon on the Mount starts out with 8 supernatural principles and blessings to live up to, if want to be a follower of Christ.

Jesus is telling his new recruits, Peter and Andrew, John and James, and the crowd that day, this faith is not a private faith, the lifestyle you are called on to live will attract attention. Will attract followers. Will attract haters.

Followers of Christ declare they are spiritually bankrupt. I've got nothing.

Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Blessed are they who mourn. Their heart breaks for the things that break the heart of God.

Blessed are the meek. They do not fight for their rights. They are humble and gentle.

Blessed are the merciful. God wants you to show mercy in this world. Jesus is saying, "there is not enough mercy in the world."

Blessed are the pure in heart. Jesus is showing us a pattern for getting close to God and for experiencing God's power, presence, and God's pardon.

Blessed are the peacemakers. God's children are the first to lend a hand at peacemaking to those who are cantankerous, contentious, and conflicted.

In one sermon series, Jesus dismantled the religion of the day, Jesus bulldozes and blasts away the tradition that had held Israel in bondage through the law, given at Sinai by Moses, but now Jesus had come to offer a New Covenant.

Because these qualities are so supernatural, the opposite of the faith and religion of the day, you can't help but become a **preserving agent, salt, and an illuminating agent, light.**

As you live out these 8 blessings, you will attract attention, and this effect will be seen **in the earth** and **around the world**. You are to have influence (salt) and illumination (light).

I love what Eugene Peterson reminds us of will happen in Matt 5:13, in the Message Paraphrase. ¹³ *“Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. (Matt 5:13)*

Unless you come in contact with the hurting, the rejected, the wealthy, the outcast, the sexually confused, those who sleep in beds that make you cringe and ingest substances that make you afraid, your flavor and illumination like salt will lose its savor. *If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You’ve lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage. (Matt 5:13-MSG)*

Now, with the few minutes that remain, let me give you some clear and concise characteristics of this salt and light lifestyle, that Jesus expects from us. This will only be a quick flyby; we will look at salt and light in detail in the next couple of weeks as move toward Convoy of Hope weekend.

It is the Holy Spirit that is doing the developing. In fact, what is happening is Christ is being formed in you as salt and light, through the power of the Holy Spirit as you align with God's word, and God's ways.

Who is the one who will condemn? Christ is the one who died (and more than that, he was raised), who is at the right hand of God, and who also is interceding for us. (Rom 8:34)

When you look closely at what is going on here at the Sermon on the Mount, this is the only place in the gospel, where Jesus uses metaphors to describe us. To describe Christ followers.

Now, Jesus uses metaphors all the time in his preaching. Of himself-I am the way, truth, and life. Of others-a farmer goes out to sow some seed, but when it comes to you and me, Jesus never uses a metaphor to describe Christians, except in this teaching.

You are the salt of the earth; you are light of the world.

What these ideas and metaphors say to us is: **you are to have impact and influence, where? Globally.**

Jesus wants his followers to advance his mission, that Jesus set in motion with his teaching, preaching, healing, and delivering ministry. And then Jesus dies, is resurrected authenticating his ministry and then He appears for 40 days, and finally ascending back to the Father where today Jesus orchestrates what is going on in the world and in your life.

Now, Jesus does this orchestration through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Just as Jesus received the Holy Spirit at this baptism, so you should receive the Holy Spirit every day for service. The Holy Spirit wants to be fully present everywhere you go, and ready to do Jesus' work through you, in Holy Spirit enablement. Empowerment. Enduement.

³³ And I did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'The one on whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining—this is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' (John 1:33-NET)

The mandate that we have received is that Jesus wants our influence to be in the world, and around the world. In the earth and around the earth. This means that Jesus expects us to do our part, but even more, all of us to do our part together. Such as with Convoy. We are called to live out our faith in the workplace, in the marketplace and in the education space.

After Jesus offers us blessings, the encouraging part, now he offers us building responsibilities to carry out those blessings. Jesus goes from encouragement to challenge. Jesus goes from being happy, to being responsible.

The rest of what Jesus teaches us will be demanding. Uncomfortable. This is the gold standard for those who want to be a fully devoted followers of Jesus. No half-hearted commitments here. YOU are either all the way in, or not in at all. And Jesus begins by saying, “I am planning to impact and rescue this world, from its current **state of decay**, the solution is salt and light, and I plan to impact and rescue the world from its current **state of darkness**, the solution is salt and light. “

Too many Christians live as if it is all about just getting to heaven, we are also called to influence and impact this world for Christ. As salt and light. Ok, I think the Holy Spirit has made that point blindingly clear today. So how do you influence and impact? How do you rescue from decay and darkness? Well, a close look at the properties of salt and light will help you understand.

When you think about salt and light, do you think Jesus is ok, with you going unnoticed? No. Can salt go unnoticed when it flavors food? Can light go unnoticed when it is turned on in a dark room? No. It is impossible.

Jesus is calling followers not to be silent. Not to be stagnant. And not to be insipid. (flavorless)

To not be passive. Irrelevant in our faith. Jesus calls us to be engaged in our culture. Jesus calls us to promote biblical values, everywhere we go. To speak the truth in love, against decay and against darkness. Either decay will be reversed, and darkness will be dispelled, or it will not.

But at least you provide an opportunity for a reversal of decay and darkness. Wherever and whenever we can. Some will listen to Jesus on this day, some will listen in this room and say, “**not for me.**” But I know most of you, and you have already said, “yes to the challenge to flavor and illuminate a decaying and dark world.”

Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth.” (Matt 5:13)

*Salt was valuable in Jesus’ day. Here we are talking about a rare and precious commodity. We take salt for granted. It is on every table. In fact, we actually are cautious about taking in too much salt.

In Jesus day, soldiers were paid with salt.

Because salt is a part of our culture there are expressions about salt: Someone is not worth their salt. What does that mean? Not worth their pay. Not pulling their weight.

* Salt is mentioned over 40 times in the bible.

*Salt has many uses. Today there is over 14,000 uses for salt. Raises the boiling point of water. But also has the opposite effect. It lowers the freezing point of ice.

When making ice-cream, get a home-making ice-cream machine, the kind you have to crank, crank it, you use salt pellets to make the ice freeze.

Salt removes rust. Puts out grease fires. It keeps cut flowers fresh. It preserves meat. Improves taste.

Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." (Matt 5:14)

*Light is visible and invisible to the human eye. Light is an energy beam that moves in wavelengths. Light travels at a speed of 186,000 miles per second. That is really fast. It is almost instantaneous. For you to get light from earth to the moon, it would only take 1.255 seconds.

*Light is mentioned over 250 times in the bible. In Gen 1:3, God said, "let there be light." The last time you see light referred to in the bible is Rev 22:5, "There will be no more night. They will not need light of a lamp or light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light."

The bible describes God as light. 1 John 1:5, "God is light. And in him is not darkness at all." Having light in the bible is a metaphor for having truth and ultimately for having Jesus.

*Light is contrasted against darkness in the bible. The bible uses light against darkness throughout the bible. When you walk in the light, you are a child of God; when you walk in darkness; you are a child of the devil; world or flesh.

Why would Jesus use these metaphors? Let me give you two ideas showing that salt and light have much in common.

1. Salt and light are both needed to sustain life. Depleted sodium levels in the human body, put the person at risk, resulting in even death.

Without natural light people die. People are depressed. People are depleted. In dark wintery climates, people suffer from depression. As salt and light, which is necessary for light, we can offer hope to a corrupt world.

Understand the metaphor, we are living in a corrupt world, decaying world, destructive world, as salt and light, you can reverse that.

You are called to give life sustaining hope to a dying world!

2. Salt and light have purifying and healing qualities.

Salt and light are beneficial to our well-being. In nature, Salt and Light purify and heal. Salt is a good antiseptic; and light is a good disinfectant. Used to kill bacteria and germs.

Light has healing properties too. Dermatologists use light to heal skins diseases. Laser therapy repairs scars. Salt slows bacterial build up, used to preserve meat and heal the body.

Ezekiel 16:4, kind of an odd reference: salt is used, not to make it into a Kansas City barbecue, but rather to eradicate germs at birth.

Salt has Anti-viral properties, who has not been told by mom, to gargle with salt? **All of this to say, “the world and the world system is infected. We live in a diseased culture. And you are the instrument that God wants to use to eradicate sin.”**

When we stand for God it has a purifying effect in the world,

When we stand for righteousness, it has a purifying effect in the earth,

When you stand with grace, and forgiveness, it has healing and preserving effect on potentially everything.

When we promote biblical values in our world, like salt and light it can illuminate from darkness, and it can preserve from decay.

John 3:16, for God so loved... ¹⁶ *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16-NIV)*

God wants nobody to perish. We perish only by rejecting Jesus. And then you are given what you wanted all of your life, to be left alone by God. And so, God grants that wish. Your final request. And at the point of death, you get your wish. Can I plead with you? Don't do it. Don't reject Christ and be separated from his love and live in a place called hell.

Your eternity is going to be lived out in one place or another. And Jesus calls us to live as salt and light to take a risk and point people to Jesus. Declaring that there is life after life. This is not reincarnation or poof the candle goes out. You will live for all of eternity as a living, eternal being in one place or another.

God has placed yellow caution tape across the entry to hell. Jesus is standing today knocking and pleading for you to reverse the course, the path, the road you are on. Stop. Look up. Cry out. Give God your life today and be forgiven and adopted into his family. God's forever family.

A place where you will grow, and a place where you will go...out into the world as salt and light.