

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - April 6, 2023

Prepared & Presented by: Pastor James G. Austin, Jr., PhD., D.Min.

Title: The Sermon on The Mount - Part X
The Beatitudes - Part IX

Topic of Discussion: "Salt of the Earth and Light of the Word"

Scripture Reference: Matthew 5:13-16

"Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men: Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

I. Introduction

- A. In these four verses the Lord summarizes the function of believers in the world. One word describes that function, influence.
- B. Whoever lives according to the Beatitudes is going to function in the world as salt and light.
- C. Consider this true story of Woodrow Wilson (the former president of the United States). He told the story of being in a barbershop one time. "I was sitting in a barber chair when I became aware that a powerful personality had entered the room. A man had come quietly in upon the same errand as myself to have

his hair cut and sat in the chair next to me. Every word the man uttered, though it was not in the least didactic ((i.e., intended for instruction)), showed a personal interest in the man who was serving him. And before I got through with what was being done to me, I was aware I had attended an evangelistic service, because Mr. D.L. Moody was in that chair. I purposely lingered in the room after he had left and noted the singular affect that his visit had brought upon the barber shop. They talked in undertones. They did not know his name, but they knew something had elevated their thoughts, and I felt that I left that place as I should have left a place of worship."

D. In Matthew 5:13-16 Jesus talks about the influence of His people on the world for God and for good. In His high priestly prayer Jesus said to His Father, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ... As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." (John 17:15-16, 18).

E. John also wrote, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (1 John 2:15).

F. As kingdom people of Jesus Christ, we are not to reflect the world but we are to influence the world. We are to be in the world not of the world.

G. When we live the life of the Beatitudes some people will respond favorably and be saved; where as others will ridicule and persecute us. In the words of Paul, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest

the savor of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savor of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savor of death unto death; and to the other the savor of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things." (2 Cor. 2:14-16).

H. Though Jesus was speaking before a great multitude of people on the hillside, His teaching about the kingdom life was primarily for his disciples, for those who believed in Him.

I. Here is a mandate for Christians to influence the world. The Beatitudes are not to be lived in isolation or only among fellow believers, but everywhere we go.

J. The figures of salt and light emphasize different characteristics of influence, but their basic purpose is the same. We will examine both of these from the aspects of the presupposition of the world's corruption and darkness, the place for believers' godly dominion in the world, the problem of the danger of failure, and the purpose of glorifying God.

II. Exposition [Part I] - The Presupposition: Corruption and Darkness

A. The world needs salt because it is corrupt, and it needs light because it is dark.

B. The biblical world view is that the world is corrupt and decayed. "Evil men and imposters will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived," Paul warns (2 Tim. 3:13).

C. Man is infected with the deadly virus of sin, which has no cure apart from God. Yet unlike their attitude toward physical diseases, most men do not want their sin cured. They love their decadence,

and they hate God's righteousness (cf. John 3:19-21). They love their own way, and they hate God's.

D. Just as every person is affected by the sin problem, every person also contributes to the sin problem.

III. Exposition [Part II] - The Dominion of His Disciples

A. The Church cannot accept the world's self-centeredness, easy solutions, immorality, and materialism. We are called to minister to the world while being separated from its standards and ways.

B. Sadly, the Church today is more influenced by the world than the world is influenced by the Church.

C. The world's corruption will not be retarded, and its darkness will not be illumined unless God's people are its salt and light.

D. In Matthew 5:13 and 14, the "Ye" in both verses is plural. It is the Lord's whole body, the church, that is called to be the world's salt and light.

E. Each grain of salt has its limited influence, but it is only as the church collectively is scattered in the world that change will come. One ray of light will accomplish little, but when joined with other rays, a great light is created.

F. The Scripture says - "Ye are ..." **Are** stresses **being** rather than **doing**. Jesus is stating a fact, not giving a command or request. Salt and light represent what Christians are.

G. The only question, as Jesus goes on to say, is whether or not we are tasteful salt and effective light. The very fact that we belong to Jesus Christ makes us His salt and light in the world.

H. Christ is the source of our savor and of our light. He is "the

true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man" (John 1:9).

I. Jesus said - "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:5). But now that He has left the world, His light comes to the world through those whom He has enlightened. We shine forth the reflected light of Christ - "For ye were sometimes (i.e., once) darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light." (Eph. 5:8).

J. Paul also records the following concerning what God has done for us: " Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated (i.e., transformed) us into the kingdom of his dear Son:" (Col. 1:13).

K. We are God's salt to retard corruption and His light to reveal truth. One function is negative, the other positive. One is silent, the other is verbal. By the indirect influence of the way we live we retard corruption, and by the direct influence of what we say we manifest light.

L. Both salt and light are unlike that which they are to influence. God has changed us from being part of the corrupted and corrupting world to being salt that can help preserve it. He has changed us from our own darkness to be His agents of giving light to others.

M. By definition, an influence must be different from that which it influences, and Christians therefore must be different from the world they are called to influence.

Points:

- 1) We cannot influence the world for God when we are worldly

ourselves.

- 2) We cannot give light to the world if we revert to places and ways of darkness ourselves.

1. Being Salt

- a. Salt has always been valuable in human society, often much more than it is today.
- b. During a period of ancient Greek history, it was called **theon**, which means divine. Often Roman soldiers were paid in salt, and it was from that practice that the expression - "**Not worth his salt**" originated.
- c. In many ancient societies salt was used as a mark of friendship. For two persons to share salt indicated a mutual responsibility to look after one another's welfare. Even if a worst enemy ate salt with you, you were obligated to treat him as a friend.
- d. Salt was frequently used in the ancient Near East to bind a covenant, somewhat in the way an agreement or contract is notarized in our day.
 - (1) When the parties to a covenant ate salt together before witnesses, the covenant was given special authentication. Though no particulars are given in the account, we learn from 2 Chronicles 13:5 that God made a covenant of salt with David.

- (2) God prescribed that all sacrificial offerings in Israel were to be offered with salt - "And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt." (Lev. 2:13).
- e. In many ways, Jesus' hearers - whether Greek, Roman, or Jewish - would have understood salt of the earth to represent a valuable commodity. Though most could not have understood His full meaning, they knew that Jesus was saying that His followers were to have an extremely important function in the world.
 - f. The primary characteristic Jesus was emphasizing about salt is that of preservation. Christians are a preserving influence in the world.

2. Being Light

- a. Jesus also calls us to be light, Ye are the light of the world. Whereas salt is hidden, light is obvious. Salt works secretly, while light works openly. Salt works from within, light from without.
- b. Salt is more the indirect influence of the gospel, while light is more its direct communication.
- c. Salt works primarily through our living, while light works primarily through what we teach and preach.

- d. Salt can retard corruption, but it cannot change it into incorruption. Light reveals what is wrong and false, but it helps produce what is righteous and true.
- e. David wrote, "For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light." (Psalm 36:9).
- f. John said - "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:5-7).

Comment: Light is not given simply to have but to live by. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalm 119:105).

- g. By its nature and definition light must be visible in order to illuminate. Christians must be more than the largely indirect influence of salt; we must also be the direct and noticeable instruments of light.
- h. Both in the daytime and at night, "**A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.**" It is exposed for all to see.
 - (1). By day its houses and buildings stand out on the landscape, and at night the many lights shining out of its windows make it impossible to miss.

Points:

- 1) Lights are to illuminate, not to be hidden; to be displayed, not to be covered.
- 2) Christians are to be both subtle salt and conspicuous light.

IV. Exposition [Part III] - The Problem: Danger of Failure

"but if the salt have lost his savor (i.e., flavor), wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." (Matt. 5:13b).

A. Much of the salt in Palestine, such as that found on the shores of the Dead Sea, is contaminated with gypsum and other minerals that make it taste flat and even repulsive.

B. When a batch of contaminated salt would find its way into a household and was discovered, it was thrown out. People would be careful not to throw it on a garden or field, because it would kill whatever was planted. Instead, it would be thrown onto a path or road, where it would gradually be ground into the dirt and disappear.

Comment: There is a sense in which salt cannot really become unsalty. But contamination can cause it to lose its value as salt. Its saltiness can no longer function.

//Don't miss this!// - Jesus is not speaking of losing salvation. God does not allow any of His own to be taken from Him.

"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them; and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck (snatch) them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all. And no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:27-29).

A Nugget for you: The verses quoted above are referred to in theology as "**The Doctrine of Eternal Security**" as it relates to our Salvation.

C. We cannot be used of God to retard the corruption of sin in the world if our own lives become corrupted by sin. To lose our saltiness is not to lose our salvation, but it is to lose our effectiveness and to become disqualified for service.

D. The Apostle Paul said - "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (disqualified). (1 Cor. 9:27).

E. Christians who are pure in heart do not become tasteless, ineffective, and useless in the kingdom of God.

F. Light, like salt, cannot lose its essential nature. A hidden light is still light, but it is useless light. That is why people do not "light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."

Point: When we hide our light because of fear of offending others, because of indifference and lovelessness, or because of anything else, we demonstrate unfaithfulness to the Lord.

V. Exposition [Part IV] - The Purpose: To Glorify God

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 5:16)

A. The Greek word *kalos* for **good** that Jesus uses in this verse does not so much emphasize quality - though that obviously is important - as it does attractiveness, beautiful appearance.

B. Letting our light shine before men allows them to see our good works, the beauty the Lord has worked in us. To see good works by us is to see Christ in us!

C. That is why Jesus says, **let your light so shine before men.**

Point: It is God's light; our choice is whether to hide it or let it shine.

D. The purpose of letting our light shine and reveal our good works is not to bring attention or praise to ourselves but to God.

E. Our intent should be that, in what we are and in what we do, others may see God in order that they may glorify our Father who is in heaven.

It is once again interactive time. Please complete the biblical passages which follow by filling in the blank spaces. Each passage has been taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

"The Lord is my _____ and my _____, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the _____ of my _____, of whom shall I be _____?"

[Psalm 27:1]

"Truly the _____ is _____, and a _____ thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;"

[Ecclesiastes 11:7]

"ARISE, shine, for thy _____ is come, and the _____ of the Lord is risen upon thee."

[Isaiah 60:1]

"The _____ of the body is the eye: if therefore thine _____ be single, they whole body shall be full of _____. But if thine eye be _____, thy whole body shall be full of _____: If therefore the _____ that is in thee be _____, how great is that darkness!"

[Matthew 6:22-23]

"Therefore judge _____ before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to _____ the hidden things of _____, and will make manifest the _____ of the hearts: and then shall _____ man have _____ of God."

[1 Corinthians 4:5]

"We have also a more sure word of _____; whereunto ye do well that ye take _____, as unto a _____ that shineth in a _____ place, until the day _____, and the day star arise in your _____."

[2 Peter 1:19]

"And there shall be no _____ there; and they need no _____,
neither _____ of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them _____;
and they shall reign for _____ and _____.

[Revelation 22:5]

It is my sincere desire that you have been blessed and encouraged during our study of this lesson. Don't be hesitant, let you shine so shine before men, so that they might see your good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

In the Master's Service

Pastor Austin