

Sermon Outline

“You Are Salt and Light,” Matthew, Part 8 – Matthew 5:13-16

Mark Mitchell – July 1, 2012

Introduction

Matthew 5:13-16 mentions salt, light, a city and a lamp. Here Jesus uses items from everyday life to tell us something very important and profound about our relationship to the world. Jesus lays out a reality, a danger and a command.

The Reality: Followers of Jesus are the salt and light of the world.

1. In speaking to his disciples, Jesus makes two statements of fact. He says, “You are the salt of the earth” and “You are the light of the world.” These aren’t suggestions or commands. They are statements of fact. Being salt and light has to do with our identity and purpose in relation to the world. Jesus chooses these common elements of salt and light to tell us something about our responsibility in the world.
 - a. We are the salt of the earth. Salt = Influence. In biblical times, salt was used both to flavor food, enhancing its taste, and to preserve food, preventing corruption and decay. In both cases, it had a beneficial influence. By telling us we are the salt of the earth, Jesus is saying that our lives are to have a beneficial influence on others around us, particularly those who don’t know Christ. Our lives should lead to a lessening of the moral decay around us. They should bring the savor of Christ to bear on those around us.
 - b. We are the light of the world. Light = Illumination. Jesus was the “great light” that came into a world of people dwelling in darkness. Apart from Jesus, they are blind, stumbling along through life, bringing harm to themselves and to one another. But Jesus has now ascended into heaven and he’s left us here as “little lights,” who through our individual lives as well as our corporate life together bring illumination to the world.
2. Like salt, others should experience the distinctiveness of our lives. This can only happen as we spend time with non-Christians. People should experience the goodness, love, peace, joy and righteousness of Jesus Christ through us as his disciples.
3. Like light, the distinctive of our lives should be *visible to others*. Not covered or hidden. They should see the difference Jesus makes in our priorities, our values and our pursuits.

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The Danger: Followers of Jesus must not become useless in the world.

1. Jesus tells us the reality then he warns us of the danger. Though we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, it is possible to become useless with respect to our responsibility.
 - a. Tasteless salt is useless. It no longer fulfills its purpose. [The word translated “has lost its taste” means “to become foolish” or “to become nonsense.”]
 - b. Hidden light is useless. It doesn’t do anyone any good to have a candle or a lamp or a flashlight hidden so no one can see its light.
 - c. Followers of Jesus who no longer influence and illuminate the world, *as it relates to our purpose*, are useless.
2. How can this uselessness happen?
 - a. Busyness – Who doesn’t feel busy? I think it’s one of the things that characterize life in this area. But have you noticed how busy we can be with our work, our families and even church life and leave little to no room for involvement with those who don’t know Christ? These are all good and godly things. But if we’re not careful, busyness can become an excuse that makes us useless as salt and light to the world.
 - b. Selfishness or Indifference – Busyness can be a symptom of a deeper issue – selfishness and indifference. Where we choose to spend our time is a good indication of the things we care about. The distinct absence of spending time with non-Christians says something very indicting about our heart: we don’t care as deeply about them the way we should. We fail to think about the fact that without Christ, they are stumbling around in the dark and are liable to God’s judgment. Our selfishness and indifference make me useless as salt and light.
 - c. Worldliness – We are all susceptible to being squeezed into this world’s mold. We can become more worldly by neglecting to shape our hearts and minds by Gods’ word or by increasingly taking in the world’s values through movies, music, and our associations. But when this takes place to such a degree that there is no noticeable difference between our lives and the world around us, we’ve become useless to the world as salt and light.

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The Command: Followers of Jesus must display good works before the world.

1. Jesus said, "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." Just as a city is set on a hill *to be seen by others* and a lamp is placed on a lampstand in order *to be seen by others*, **in the same way**, Jesus commands us to display our good works in order *to be seen by others*. Jesus wants our good works to be visible in order to bring glory to God.
 - a. As commentator R. T. France writes, "It is only as this distinctive lifestyle is visible to others that it can have its desired effect. But that effect is also now spelled out not as the improvement and enlightenment of society as such, but rather as the glorifying of God by those outside the disciple community. The subject of this discourse, and the aim of the discipleship which it promotes, is not so much the betterment of life on earth as the implementation of the reign of God."

Closing Application

1. Pray about this privately. Pray together in groups. Ask God to show you how to be salt and light wherever you are.
2. Talk about this with one another. Talk about it in your Care Group. Make these categories of being salt and light a regular part of your fellowship. Are you convicted? Share that with others. Ask them to pray for you and maybe even provide some helpful accountability. Has God used you in a particular way? Share that too. Let's be encouraged and spurred on together.

Fellowship Starters

1. Take time as a Care Group to read Matthew 5:13-16
2. We are called salt and light of the world. What are some specific ways your everyday life has had a beneficial influence and illumining effect on others around you?
3. What are new places or contexts you feel God calling you to be more faithful in being an influence of Christ's redemptive work to unbelievers?
4. Do you see your neighbors, co-workers, fellow students and family members as stumbling around in the dark? As a follower of Christ, are you influencing others for the sake of Christ's kingdom? Does your life shine as a light in a dark place? If not, what hinders you from being salt and light?
5. What characterizes your speech and conduct in the workplace, at school or in the community? Is it noticeably and distinctively different from non-Christians around you or do you look and act as they do?
6. Are there a couple brothers or sisters in Christ that you can talk and pray with about being salt and light of the world? Ask God to show you how to be salt and light wherever you

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are. Ask them to pray for you and maybe even provide some helpful accountability. Think of some ways you can encourage and spur each other on.