

I invite you to open your bibles this morning to today's scripture text which can be found in Matthew, the 5th chapter, verses 13 – 16. We begin a new series today continuing our discovery of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus's intimate teachings to us, his children, his peacemakers, today we will cover the salt the light, and the good deeds. revealing the principle of purpose.

Mt 5:13-16

13 "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 by men.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 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.

16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

As we continue our life journey on the pathway into God's kingdom, seeking eternity with him in heaven, with the full realization of our identity as his children we must know what our God intended purpose is. Christ revealed what our Christian nature should be as his disciples in the beatitudes. Peacemakers with a pure heart, maintaining a single-minded focus on Gods will for our lives and the lives of all those around us. Being merciful to all that God places within our life pathways, while hungering and thirsting for his righteousness. *Persevering* with a *meek temperament* by diligently taking Christs spirit upon us.

Realizing our Christian identity places us in God's kingdom, providing us God's comfort. Placing us in his providential care, allowing for his grace to flow into our lives. Gifting to us our inheritance, with total satisfaction, while receiving his mercy, and making our hearts pure. Growing in us the righteous fruits of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The beatitudes present a portrait of the ideal citizen in Christ's kingdom. Our portrait, our identity, our citizenship, our purpose.

While we were not there, sitting at Christs feet on the mount. Hearing directly the wisdom of God as our Lord Jesus poured out his heart. We know that he was speaking to us, because we have chosen to be his disciples. There is nothing more rewarding in this world than to not only know what Gods purpose is for you, but to live it out daily, as we continue to be his ministers of love. For we all know that Jesus is the prince of peace, and through our discipleship we become his ambassadors of peace. Within the sermon on the mount, the revealing of our purpose is given directly following the pronouncement of the blessings we receive as his citizens.

Do you think it's random that the next thing out of his mouth was, "You're the salt of the earth. You're the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13–14). That's not random. I think what he means is: *The taste of life that people are aching for is to see a person who's happy in the midst of pain.*

People want to see somebody who has something so deep, so unshakeable, so indomitable and invincible that when all around their soul gives way, their joy doesn't give way. That would be so salty. So bright. That would be so bright, it would look like the glory of God on earth.

Mt 5:13

13 "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 by men.

When Jesus said this, he provided us with an expression which has become the greatest compliment that can be paid to anyone. When we wish to stress someone's purpose, their solid worth and usefulness, we say of them, "People like that are the salt of the earth."

In the ancient world salt was highly valued. The Greeks called salt divine. In a phrase, which in Latin is a kind of jingle, the Romans said, "There is nothing more useful than sun and salt." In the time of Jesus salt was connected in people's minds with three special qualities.

The first special quality is that salt was connected with *purity*. No doubt its glistening whiteness made the connection easy. The Romans said that salt was the purest of all things, because it came from the purest of all things, the sun and the sea. Salt was the most primitive of all offerings to the gods, and at the end of the day the Jewish sacrifices were offered with salt. So, if Christians are to be the salt of the earth, they must be an example of purity.

One of the characteristics of the world in which we live is the lowering of standards. Standards of honesty, standards of diligence in work, standards of conscientiousness, moral standards, all tend to be lowered. The Christian must be the person who holds aloft the standard of absolute purity in speech, purity in conduct, and purity in thought. No Christian can depart from the standards of strict honesty. No Christian can think lightly of the lowering of moral standards in a world where the streets of every great city provide their deliberate enticements to sin. Christians can not allow themselves the tarnished and suggestive jests which are so often part of social conversation. Christians cannot withdraw from the world, they must, as James said, keep themselves “unstained from the world” (Ja 1:27)

The second special quality connected to salt, was that in the ancient world salt was the commonest of all preservatives. It was used to keep things from going bad, and to sustain purification. A famous Greek biographer and essayist, Plutarch, has a strange way of putting that. He says that meat is a dead body and part of a dead body, and will, if left to itself, go bad; but salt preserves it and keeps it fresh, and is therefore like a new soul inserted into a dead body.

So, salt preserves from corruption. If Christians are to be the salt of the earth, they must have a certain antiseptic influence on life. If Christians are to be the salt of the earth, they must serve as a preservative against the corruption and moral decay of the world.

The greatest, and the most obvious quality of salt is that salt lends flavor to things and improves taste. Food without salt is a sadly bland and even a sickening thing. *Christianity is to life what salt is to food.* Just as salt makes food *better food*, Christianity must make the world a *better world*. Christianity lends flavor to life.

The sad thing is that so often people have connected Christianity with precisely the opposite. They have connected Christianity with that which takes the flavor out of life. People need to discover, and to be shown by us, the radiance of the Christian faith. In a worried world, Christians should be the only ones who remain serene, calm, and at peace. In a depressed world, the Christian should be the only one who remains full of the joy of life. There should be a sparkle, a zeal about the Christian, where ever we are, if we are to be the salt of the earth, we must be the diffuser of joy. You will be what the world needs. You will be what the taste buds of their soul are longing for even if they don't know it.

Jesus went on to say that, if the salt loses its flavor, it was fit only to be thrown out and trodden on by men. This is difficult, because salt does not lose its flavor, and salt does not lose its saltiness. In a book titled *Jesus of Palestine*, the author sites a very likely explanation. In Palestine, the ordinary oven is out of doors, and is built of stone on a base of tiles. In such ovens in order to retain the heat a thick bed of salt is laid under the tiled floor. After a certain length of time the salt perishes.

The tiles are taken up, the salt is removed, and it is thrown on the road outside the door of the oven. It has lost its power to heat the tiles and it is thrown out. That may well be the picture here.

But the essential point remains whatever the picture, and it's a point which the New Testament makes and remakes again and again – *uselessness invites disaster*. If Christians are not fulfilling their purpose as Christians, then they are on their way to disaster. Jesus intends his people to influence the world. We are meant to be the salt of the earth, and if we do not bring life to purity, the antiseptic power, the zeal and radiance that we are to bring, then we invite disaster.

The Christian disciple has one great function -- to be the salt of the earth by living out the terms of discipleship listed in the Beatitudes and throughout the rest of the sermon. If we fail to exhibit this spiritual reality, people will tread our testimony under their feet. The world has only contempt for an undedicated believer.

Mt 5:14-16

14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 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. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

So, again Jesus gives us here, purpose. Jesus calls us, "the light of the world." Here Jesus commands Christians to be what he himself claimed to be. Jesus said, in John 9:5 "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Jn 8:12-13 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Again, in Jn 12:35-36 Then Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. 36 Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light."

When Jesus commands us, his followers, to be the lights of the world, he demanded nothing less than that we should be like him. When Jesus spoke these words, he was using an expression which was quite familiar to the Jews who heard it for the first time. They themselves spoke of Jerusalem as "a light to the Gentiles," and a famous Rabbi of Jerusalem as "a lamp of Israel." But the way in which the Jews used this expression will give us a key to the way in which Jesus also used it.

One thing the Jews were very sure of – no one kindled their own light. Jerusalem was indeed a light to the Gentiles, but God lit Israel's lamp. The light with which the nation or the man of God shone was a borrowed light. It must be so with the Christian. It is not the demand of Jesus that we should, as it were, produce our own light. We must shine with the reflection of his light. The radiance which shines from the Christian comes from the presence of Christ within the Christian's heart.

So when Jesus tells us to be the light of the world, what does he mean? First, and foremost, a light is meant to be seen. The houses in Palestine were very dark with only one little circular window. The lamp was like a sauce-boat filled with oil with the wick floating in it. It wasn't so easy to rekindle the lamp in the days before matches existed. Normally the lamp stood on the lampstand which would be no more than a roughly shaped branch of wood; but, when people went out, for safety's sake, they took the lamp from the stand, and put it under an earthen bushel, so that it might burn without risk until they came back. The primary duty of the light of the lamp was to be seen. A lamp provides light precisely so that one can see in the darkness, and it is nonsense to conceal it.

So, Christianity is something which is meant to be seen. The citizens of the kingdom *are* light, and they must shine and not conceal that light. The result is the enhancement of God's reputation in the world, not the glorification of the lamp. Christians function are to be the reflection of Christ's light, just as the moon reflects the glory of the sun.

An essential point about being the light of the world as Christ commands us to be, is to be *just that*, a light *of the world*. Not a light of the church. Our purity, our zeal, our desire to bring help to those who need conversion, who need sanctification cannot be effective if we don't take it into the world. If it only shines here in the church it really can't be of much help to anyone lost in darkness, can it?

Our light, that is Christ in us, should be even more visible during the ordinary activities of the world. Our Christianity should be visible in the way we treat a shop assistant across the counter, in the way we order our food in a restaurant, in the way we treat our employees or serve our employer, in the way we play a game, or drive a car, in the way we speak to others, in the books we read. A Christian should be just as much a Christian in the factory, the workshop, the shipyard, the mine, the schoolroom, the kitchen, the golf course, or where ever you may be throughout the course of your day. Jesus did not say you are the light of the Church. He said you are the light of the world, and in our lives in the world our Christianity, the light should be evident to all.

As the light of the world, we are to be a guide. We know how dangerous the roads were before there were street lights and traffic lights, or how many lives were lost before there were lighthouses on the shores to guide ships to safety. A light is something to make clear the way.

So as Christians we must make the way clear to others. It is a necessity that we must be an example to others. One of the things that the world, today's society truly needs more than anything else is people who are prepared to be the example of goodness. Let's say for instance that you are with a group of people, and it's suggested that something questionable or wrong be done. Unless someone in the group protests, then its certain the bad deed will be done. But, if someone takes a stand for the right thing to be done, then each in turn may come to see the light, the darkness in the situation will be revealed. Light exposes darkness. Had they not been given the lead, most would have remained silent.

There are so many people in this world that don't have the moral strength and courage to do the right thing, or to take a stand by themselves, but if someone gives them the lead, they will follow; if they have someone strong enough to lean on, they will do the right thing. It is the Christians duty to take the stand which the weaker brother will support, to give the lead which those with less courage will follow. The world needs its guiding lights; there are people waiting and longing for a lead to take a stand and to do the thing that they do not dare do by themselves.

A light can often be a warning light. A light is often the warning which tells us to halt when there is danger ahead. What would our traffic intersections today be like without lights? Can you imagine the level of accidents, casualties, or deaths? Its unthinkable. It is sometimes a Christians purpose to be that warning light. It is our purpose to bring to our friends, family, strangers the necessary warning of danger or wrongful doings. That can be very difficult at times cant it? It can be very difficult to do in a way which will not do more harm than good; but one of the most poignant tragedies in life is for someone to come to us and say, " I would never have been in this situation in which I now find myself, if you would have spoken to me in time."

If our warnings are given, not in anger, not in irritation, not in criticism, not in condemnation, not in the desire to hurt, but they are given in love, they will be effective. The light which can be seen, the light which warns, the light which guides, these are the lights which the Christians must be.

This brings us to our final observation. If our purpose, commanded by our Lord Jesus, is to be the salt, and to be the light, what should be our motivation?

Jesus tell us, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” To give God the glory. Not our glory Father, your glory. As Christians, we must never think of what we have done, but what God has enabled us to do, what God is doing through us, in us, around us.

We must never attempt to draw eyes of men to ourselves for our own glory, but we must strive to direct them to God. As long as we are thinking of getting the praise for ourselves, the thanks, the prestige that we will get for what we have done, and not giving God the glory for what he is doing, we have not really even begun on the Christian way.

We must shine for God, his Shekinah glory must radiate through us. People are to see our good deeds. In greek there are two words for good. There is the word which simply defines a thing as good in quality, and there is the word Kalos, which means that a thing is not only good, but that it is also captivating, delightful, loveable, desirable, and inviting. This is the good we are talking about.

(meal for the young pregnant bride story)

The good deeds of the Christian must be not only good, they must draw people in, so that they will want to know what is the source of this goodness is. What makes you so peculiar? So loveable? There is a goodness which attracts and a goodness which repels. There is a charm in true Christian goodness which makes it a lovely thing. But we must continue to draw attention not to ourselves, but to God. Our goodness must not be theatrical goodness, but that of purity. Seeking to witness to others the love that is God in us.

So as we continue our life journey on the pathway into God's kingdom, seeking eternity with him in heaven, knowing that we are God's children, his peacemakers. Let's remember our purpose that Jesus has revealed to us here today. Be the salt of the earth, preserving the purity left in the world, giving flavor to life around you. Be the light of the world, take your light out of your house, into the darkness, and let God's shekinah glory shine through you with the brilliance of hope that he brings to all the lost seeking direction in life. Let all that God sends to you to minister to, know that it God who deserves the glory.

Gracious and Kind Heavenly Father

We thank you Father for sending your Son, our Lord Jesus into this world  
to be the light of the world.

To be our prince of peace.

To be the source hope that we so desperately desire.

As we go out, into the world to seek the lost,

May your purpose for us be fulfilled,

May we be the salt of the earth, may we be the light of the world.

Let your Shekinah Glory shine through us for all to see.

May we bring you the glory Father, in all that we think, say, and do

So that all those we meet will want to know

what is the source of our goodness,

for we know that it is only you. Let them know that through our good deeds

Let them be drawn deeply into your loving kindness, your peace, your purity