

A Life That Matters

Matthew 5:13-16

April 10, 2016

Bill has been praying for a way to reach his new neighbor for Christ and when he saw the struggle with the antiquated mower, a light bulb went on. There was a brand new power mower in his garage! He wheeled it across the street and insisted that his new neighbor use it, not just that day, but every time the grass needed mowing.

Bill said, "I just want you to know that Jesus loves you."

About eight weeks later, **there was a knock at the door, and there stood the new neighbor, with** one of those monster, twenty pound Family bibles in hand. Rather awkwardly, the man pointed out **his family tree, the marriage certificates at the front, and the burial notices.**

Finally, he asked, **"How can I be born again?"** The Christian friend had the privilege of pointing his neighbor to Christ, **because of a lawnmower.**

In today's few verses, Jesus continues to speak to Christ Followers. **His words have not lost their relevance to Kingdom People.** If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, **your King is speaking to you:** Matthew 5:13-16 "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.

We have been talking about Kingdom Living as we are examining the Sermon on the Mount. In the Beatitudes, Jesus describes the character of Kingdom people. Since these qualities are true, He goes on to affirm **"You are the Salt of the Earth, You are the Light of the world."**

As we consider the implication of these descriptions, the word that comes to mind is Influence. Jesus is telling Kingdom People, that you **will** make a difference in your world. You **will** make an impact on people's lives. Jesus doesn't say **"this may happen."** Jesus tells us, If you are Kingdom People, Living out Kingdom qualities, **then this is true about you!**

Jesus is describing here 2 completely essential components of human life. Even the poorest person listening to Jesus would understand the **necessity & value of salt and light.**

Our bodies must have salt in order to survive. Sodium Chloride/Salt is the 2nd most important ingredient in our bodies, after water. Studies **indicate that sodium plays a large role in preventing loss of memory.** It also enhances overall mental efficiency and performance. **There are at least a couple of dozen significant impacts it has in our body.**

Because of its essential nature, **Salt** has monetary value. In Jesus' day, it was often used as currency, even being used to pay the wages of Roman soldiers. **The origin of "Not worth his salt."** **Meant one didn't earn their pay.** Ultimately the value of salt is not in its possession, but in its use. It must come out of the salt shaker. **One place I read suggested there are more than 14,000 uses for salt in our world.**

The Christian life should have such an influence on those around us. We are the salt of the earth.

Salt Flavors, it helps to make food taste better. – **you don't really want to taste the salt. The correct amount** enhances & magnifies the taste of the food. **For the follower of Jesus – We should improve the quality and enjoyment of life around us.** Our lives should be better, because of our relationship with Jesus. – As we experience the **Fruit of the Spirit – Joy, peace, patience,** and the rest, these are characteristics, **these are qualities that most people would like to experience in their lives.**

A relationship with God provides...

His power to cope with difficulties.

His purpose, to give our lives meaning.

His direction to help us know where to go.

The Christian life should reflect a true fullness and joy of life.

People should want to be around us for what we, **and God** can add to their lives.

Salt Preserves – pack fish and meat in salt to keep it fresh.

The True Kingdom Person works to Preserve, only in Christ is there the ability to be freed from the domination of sin. **We are not perfect, just forgiven.** The sin issues that have been dealt with in our lives, **are being faced by others.**

It is a powerful part of our testimony to describe what issues God has freed us from. **As they see our example, and hear our story, it may influence them to consider Christ and to see their lives transformed as well.**

Salt can Irritate – if you put salt in a wound, **it stings, but also kills bacteria.**

Often, those far from God, **are irritated by those who live God's way.** They may dislike what they see, **or feel that we are being judgmental about their immoral life style.** Whether we are or not. **This may cause them to be defensive or even angry towards Kingdom People.** The hope is that this will be the beginning for them wanting to **experience what they see in God's people.**

Jesus also tells us that **"We are the light of the world."**

Light is necessary for the survival of life on Earth, almost all energy used by life is derived from the sun.

We need the sunlight for things to grow and flourish, Light gives life. **As Christ gives life** (1 John 5:12 NIV) "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

There is even something psychological that impacts people who don't get enough sun. **We need light to see our way, and to allow us to accomplish most tasks.** Light can be a source for heat. **Without light there is no color.** When used as a laser light can be a cutting tool or a powerful weapon.

Light dispels darkness.

Light guides.

Light reveals what is there.

Many places in scripture describes the world in terms of light and dark as a representation of the spiritual struggle between good and evil. **We make a choice to follow God, or not.** We choose between life and death.

John 1:1-5

...God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ... But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

John 8:12

Jesus said, "I am the **light** of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in **darkness**, but will have the **light** of life."

As we share God's truth and it is lived out in our lives,

We shine light into a dark world.

We can be a beacon that draws others to Christ.

We can bring warmth and comfort into people's lives.

As we share Christ, we can help to lead others to new life.

Light impacts our lives in significant ways.

"You ARE the Salt of the Earth!"

"You ARE the Light of the World!"

In both cases Jesus warns us against not being effective. **"If the salt loses it's saltiness, of what good is it?" "No one would hide a light under a basket."**

If those things happened, we would not accomplish our purpose, **which is to make a difference in the lives of others.**

Henry Blackaby, "Experiencing God," "If the world is becoming darker, **the problem is not with the darkness. The problem is with the light.**"

Let me leave you with 3 general truths from Jesus' illustrations of salt and light.

1. We must be seen.

Our light is not to be hidden. Our salt must be poured out of the salt shaker. **People around us must know that we are a Christ Follower.** They must be aware, and they must see a difference.

A pastor warned a young man in his church that was moving away **that the company he was joining was very worldly and could be a bad influence on him,** and furthermore, they would treat him very badly **for being a Christian.**

Months later he heard just the opposite, **that the man's experience had been 'nothing but pleasant.'** The pastor asked, 'you mean they haven't persecuted you for being a Christian?' He replied, 'Nope! **Matter of fact, I don't think they have even found out!**'

What do people see when they look at you?

Does Jesus show through?

2. **We must be in contact with others.**

A book from about 30 years ago, is still very relevant today, "Out of the Salt Shaker."

The thesis being, that Christians **must be in contact with the unsaved world if their saltiness is going to make a difference.**

Understand me when I say this, **know my heart**, know that I am pro church. **But, Christ Followers should not spend all of their time in church or with believers.** If we are going to make a difference, **if we are going to have an influence** to preserve and to bring light, we have to have contact.

Be in contact, **be involved**

3. **We need to make an impact.**

As salt and light, we are useful only if we accomplish our purpose. **Only if we season the world around us, if we preserve and even irritate.** We are useful if we shine a light into the darkness, if we are a beacon that leads others to God, or if we **warm the world around us with the glow of God's love..**

Not everyone has the gift of evangelism. **But all Christ Followers are salt and light.** The question is whether we get out of the salt shaker, and out from under the basket. **We need to be intentional to make these kinds of impact.** We need to have a plan as to how we might show God's love, **or to begin a conversation about spiritual matters.**

Think about people that you know who need Jesus in their lives. **Co-worker, neighbor, friend, family member, or someone else.** Pray for them to come to Jesus. Pray for an open door that you can **share God's love, or the truth of Christ** with them.

What question can you ask? **Or what can you say to them** in order to prompt a conversation about spiritual things? **What actions can you take**, that will communicate God's love **that will prompt them to ask why?** Be prepared to share Jesus with them. Think about the qualities of salt and light, **How do you live them out?**

The Message, Matthew 5:13-16

"Let me tell you why you are here. **You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth.** If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? **If that happens you've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.**

"Here's another way to put it: **You're here to be light**, bringing out the God-colors in the world. **God is not a secret to be kept.** We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill.

If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? **I'm putting you on a light stand.** Now—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, Our generous Father in heaven.

What opportunities is God providing for you to influence others, and to make a difference in the world?

Come on Kingdom People!

This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji
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