

Pour the Salt and Turn on the Light

Matthew 5:13-16

We are moving into the next phase of our series on the Sermon on the Mount that I have entitled,

"The Only Way to Live."

The reason I have given it that title is because that is exactly what Jesus tells us in the greatest sermon ever preached in the history of the world—the Sermon on the Mount.

A Chinese Christian came to a missionary one time and said, "I have learned to quote the entire Sermon on the Mount by memory." He stood before the missionary and perfectly quoted the sermon word-for-word.

The missionary said, "*That is wonderful. How did you do it?*" The Chinese Christian said, "*I spent the last year trying to live it.*"

Dr. James Stewart, a great British preacher, once said: "The greatest threat to Christianity is not COMMUNISM, it's not ATHEISM, it's not MATERIALISM and it's not HUMANISM. The greatest threat to Christianity is Christians trying to sneak into heaven incognito WITHOUT ever sharing their faith, WITHOUT ever living out the Christian life, WITHOUT ever becoming involved in the most significant work God is doing on planet earth."

This Is Exactly The Problem Jesus Was Trying To Remedy With This Sermon.

Think About The Crowd To Whom Jesus Was Speaking. It wasn't a gathering of the United Nations; it wasn't the Congress or a Parliament, or even an assembly at City Hall. It was a crowd on a hillside in a tiny spot of land called Palestine. It was a group of common people living common ordinary lives.

They Were Under Occupation; They Couldn't Make Their Own Laws; They Couldn't Plan Their Own Futures;

They Couldn't Determine Their Own Destinies; Yet Jesus Said To Them,

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

You May Think You Are Insignificant, But I Can Tell You If You Are A Christian You Can Make An Incredible Difference In This World.

I heard about a man that was walking through a county fair when he met a tiny little girl who was carrying a gigantic fluff of cotton candy on a stick, which was almost as big as she was. He said to her, "*How can a little girl like you eat all of that cotton candy?*" She looked up at him and said, "*Well, I'm really much bigger on the inside than I am on the outside.*"

THAT IS TRUE OF ALL OF US WHO ARE CHRISTIANS. WE ARE SALT AND WE ARE LIGHT.

But Just What Does This Mean? Why Does Jesus Insist That We Need To "Pass The Salt And Turn On The Light?" How Are We To Do That?

Shake the Salt on a Decaying World

"You are the salt of the earth." (v.13a)

Why does Jesus refer to US as salt?

Salt is a miracle. As you know, it is chemically composed of sodium and chloride. Now pour a little hydrochloric acid on your hand, and it will be burned away in less than a minute. Drink hydrochloric acid and you will die in unbelievable agony very quickly.

But when you add sodium to hydrochloride you have salt, which is one of the most common useful substances on planet earth.

You need to understand how valuable salt was in the days of Jesus. What we take for granted today was like pure gold to them. You see, salt is a preservative, and 2,000 years ago people did not have refrigeration.

Salt was so valuable in Bible days that it was often traded ounce-for-ounce with gold. Roman soldiers were paid in salt.

In fact, the word SALARY is derived from the word for salt. If a Roman soldier didn't do his job, he wouldn't get all of his salt. That's where we get the phrase, "*He Is Not Worth His Salt*," if someone does not do a good days work.

Our World Is Decaying, Our World Is Rotting, And It Is Our Job As Salt To Preserve The Holiness Of God, And The Goodness Of Jesus As Much As We Can.

As bad as things are, can you imagine how bad things would be if there were no churches? How bad would things be if there were no Christians? How bad would things be if there were no Bibles? How bad would things be if there were no preachers of the gospel?

Yes, we need to be salt, But There's A Danger.

Jesus goes on to say,

"...But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?" (v.13b)

Now any chemistry teacher will tell you that it's impossible, in a way, for salt to become UNSALTY. Sodium chloride is one of the most stable compounds in the entire universe; it doesn't change and it never loses its character.

But There Is Truth To What Jesus Is Saying.

You see, much of the salt that was used in Palestine came from the Dead Sea, which is more than a mile and a half below sea level. The waters of the Sea of Galilee flow into the Jordan River and from there to the Dead Sea to the bottom of the earth.

Once the water gets there, there is no place to go. The hot sun evaporates the water and leaves behind a chunky white powder made up of a combination of salt and minerals. That powder contains enough salt to season meat or to flavor soup, and that's why people used to get their salt from the Dead Sea.

But it's also mixed with minerals and its not pure sodium chloride. It's possible with a little dampness in the air for that salt to be dissolved and basically to dissipate.

When that happens the "Salt Loses Its Seasoning."

Now What Does That Have To Do With You And Me?

Well, the worst thing that a Christian could lose is not his wealth, nor his job, nor his health, nor his family, not even his life; The Worst Thing A Christian Can Lose Is His Testimony.

Because When You Lose Your Testimony Your Salt Loses His Seasoning; It Loses Its Flavor.

When that happens Jesus goes on to say,

"It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men." (v.13c)

It is literally "GOOD FOR NOTHING."

I'm reminded of a little boy who came into his house one day, and he said, "Mother, if you'll give me \$5 I'll be a good boy today." She looked at him and said, "Why can't you be good for nothing like your daddy?"

You see, the one thing that can contaminate the salt of our life is The Dirt Of Worldliness.

One man said, "I look for the church and found it in the world, and when I looked for the world I found it in the church."

Let me give you an illustration of what I am talking about.

When We Conform To The Culture, Instead Of Transforming The Culture, We Lose Our Seasoning.

Jesus says, ***"It is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men."***

What Does This Mean?

Whenever salt that was brought out from the Dead Sea would be contaminated with other minerals that would make it taste flat or even repulsive, the salt became worthless. You couldn't throw it on a garden or a field because it would kill what was planted.

So instead, it would be thrown onto the roads where it would gradually be ground into the dirt and disappear, and then people could just walk over it.

The Church Is Being Walked On By The World Today. There is no respect for the church in this world anymore.

Several years ago I read in Sports Illustrated a quote that was not a criticism of the church by a statement of fact by the screen writer in the movie, "Concussion." The movie is about the head injuries that football player could potentially suffer. One of the characters in the movie is warning the Doctor who is taking on the National Football League. The character says, *"Be careful, remember you are taking on the NFL who owns one day of the week which used to be owned by the churches."*

The reason is this: Because We Are Too Much Like The World.

We use the same foul language, see the same movies, ignore the same Bible, and the fact is the average person on the outside of the church looks at the average person on the inside of the church and says, *"He's no different than I am, so why should I go to church or practice Christianity?"*

As you know the majority religion in America is still Christianity, and yet we are dominated today not by the values of Christianity, But By The Values Of Humanism And Secularism.

Yet, in South Korea, even though there are 35 million Buddhists, and only Two Million Evangelical Christians, Christian values dominate that culture.

Why is that?

It Is Because Korean Christians Understand They Are To Be The Salt Of The Earth.

Incidentally, keep in mind that Jesus said "*you are the salt of the earth.*"

Salt Is Worthless If It Never Comes In Contact With Food. It may look nice in the shaker, but if it stays in the shaker it is worthless.

You See, The Church Is The Salt Shaker And The Earth Is The School, The Business, And The Neighborhood. We Need To Get The Salt Out Of The Shaker On To The Earth Where It Can Do Some Good.

I heard about a man that walked into the little Mom and Pop grocery store and said, "*Do you sell salt?*" The man said, "*Do we sell salt! Just look!*"

The man showed the customer an entire wall of shelves stocked with nothing but salt—Morton salt, iodized salt, kosher salt, sea salt, rock salt, garlic salt, seasoning salt, Epsom salts—every kind of salt imaginable. The customer was amazed. "*You think that's something. Come over here.*" He led the customer to a back room filled with shelves and bins and cartons and barrels and boxes of salt. The customer said, "This is unreal!" The man said, "You hadn't seen anything yet."

He led the customer down some steps into a huge basement, five times as large as the previous room. It was filled wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling with every imaginable form, size, and shape of salt you could imagine. The man looked at him and said, "*You really do sell salt!*" The store owner said, "*No, we don't, that's just the problem! We never sell salt. BUT THAT SALT SALESMAN THAT COMES BY EVERY WEEK, BOY DOES HE SELL SALT!*"

HERE'S THE POINT: Salt That Stays On The Shelf Doesn't Do Anyone Any Good. It Must Get Out And It Must Be Different.

Shine the Light to a Darkened World

"You are the light of the world."(v.14a)

Now What Is The Difference Between Salt And Light? SALT relates to our Character; LIGHT relates to our Conduct. SALT deals with What We Are; LIGHT deals with What We Do.

We Know What Light Does—It Dispels Darkness, And It Attracts. If You're In A Dark Place With Just One Light, All Eyes Will Focus On That Light.

Light is what gives sailors a course to follow across the seas. They determine a direction oftentimes by the stars that are light-years away. The gleam of a lighthouse on the horizon gives direction and attracts attention.

Now it ought to be obvious, but the reason why Jesus commands that we shine as light is BECAUSE THIS WORLD IS IN TOTAL DARKNESS.

Several times in the Bible we are commanded to shine as Light In A Dark World.

2 Cor. 4:6 says, "For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Phil. 2:15 says, "...that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."

Eph. 5:8 says, "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light."

Now some of you may be thinking: "Wait a minute. Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world.' HOW ARE WE TO BE LIGHTS?"

Well, it is very simple.

You see, Jesus is the SUN; we are the Moon.

He is the light that REVEALS God; we are to be the light that REFLECTS God.

I heard about a little boy that was taken by his mother to see a famous cathedral. On the windows were the pictures of various Christians. As he was watching the sunbeams shining through the stained-glass windows, he asked his mother, *"Who are those people on the windows?"*

She said, *"They're saints."* The little boy looked at the windows and said, *"Well, now I know what saints are. THEY ARE PEOPLE WHO LET THE LIGHT SHINE THROUGH."*

That little boy got it right.

That's What A Saint Is—Someone Who Lets The Light Of Jesus Shine Through His Life.

Jesus goes on to say,

"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden." (v.14b)

Back in Bible days they didn't have bulldozers like we have, so cities were built one layer over another. When a city was invaded and burned down and destroyed, they would take all the rubble, knock it down, use that as a foundation and build the city all over again, layer by layer. For example, the ancient city of Jericho, These hills are called "Tells," and a city built on a Tell or a hill cannot be hidden.

Neither Should Your Light.

Jesus goes on to say in

v.15, "Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house."

You see, as the song goes, *"We Are To Let Our Little Light Shine."*

Too many Christians, I think, believe they are in the CIA, and they are in a way, but CIA does not stand for Central Intelligence Agency, it stands for Christians in Action.

Too many Christians are like a little boy I heard about one time who was out playing with a mongrel dog in his front yard. It was a half breed. A man came walking by one day and saw this little boy playing with this dog, and he said, *"Hey son, what kind of a mutt is that?"* The little boy indignantly said, *"Why he's a police dog."*

The man said, *"He doesn't look like a police dog."* The boy said, *"Well, You See, He's In The Secret Service."*

We Don't Need Any Secret Service Christians. You Need To Be Light In A Dark World.

Notice Jesus did not say "You Can Be Salt, Or You Should Be Light." He said, "YOU ARE."

YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?

Shake The Salt On A Decaying World,

Shine The Light To A Darkened World.

Share the Truth to a Dying World

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

Jesus concludes by saying this. *Now That Raises Some Questions.*

How Do You Know If You're Being Salt And Light? How Do You Know If You're Shaking The Salt, And How Do You Know If You're Shining The Light?

Well, here is the test; if *"men see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*

I am convinced that the two greatest days in the life of an individual who is a Christian is,

FIRST of all, The Day When He Is Born Again, and

SECOND, The Day When He Comes To Understand WHY He Is Born Again.

When you begin to live your life in such a way that people are attracted to Jesus Christ, and want to glorify your Father in heaven, you will know that your salt is tasty and your light is bright.

Someone has said, *"The Real Mark Of A Saint Is That He Makes It Easier For Others To Believe In God."*

Some of you will remember the days of the Susan B. Anthony dollar. It only lasted for three years. You know why? Because it looked too much like a quarter, and people didn't like all the confusion. In the public's mind a dollar ought to look like a dollar, and like it's worth four quarters not just one.

Because the coin seemed like just another piece of change, it fell out of circulation.

Yogi Berra once said, *"A dime isn't worth a nickel anymore."*

A Lot Of Christians Are The Same Way.

You Ought To Live Your Life In Such A Way And Reflect The Lord Jesus Christ In Such A Way, That It Not Only Brings Glory To God, But It Causes Other People To Want To Glorify God.

A Sunday School teacher was talking to his class one time, and he said, "Boys, here's a WATCH. What is it for?" They said, "To tell the time." He said, "Well, suppose the watch doesn't keep time. What is it good for?" They said, "GOOD FOR NOTHING."

He then took out a PENCIL and said, "What is this pencil for?" They said, "It's to write with." He said, "Suppose the pencil won't make a mark. What is it good for?" They said, "GOOD FOR NOTHING."

Then he took out a KNIFE, and he said, "Boys, what is this for?" They said, "To cut things with." He said, "But suppose it won't cut anything. What is it good for?" They said, "GOOD FOR NOTHING."

The teacher then looked at the class and said, "Boys, whatever else you do, if you do NOT glorify God by the way you live, and bring others to glorify God, then what are you good for?" They all said, "GOOD FOR NOTHING."

I want to close with this last thought. Jesus said, "*You are the salt of the earth....you are the light of world.*"

Not just salt for your neighborhood or for the city where you live, But There's Enough Salt And Enough Light For All Of The Earth And The Entire World.

I heard a story one time about A Duck that broke his wing during the flight home for the winter. A sympathetic farmer retrieved the fallen duck and took him home. The farmer's children adopted the duck as their pet and began to feed him from the table and take him along as they performed their daily chores.

By Next Fall the children were heartbroken as they watched the duck look at the other ducks that were flying south for the winter, but his wing still wasn't strong enough for the flight. Every time a flock flew south, the duck would look longingly into the sky and then return to play with the children.

Well, the Second Year the duck's wing had grown much stronger, but the children had fed the duck so well that when he attempted to take off he was too fat to get off the ground. After one or two attempts he gave up and returned to play with the children.

The Third Year the duck was completely healed. But as the other ducks quacked their call to go south, the duck never even looked up as they flew over. He had become so accustomed to the comfort of his new existence he had lost his focus on the true calling and meaning of his life.

God Has Not Called Us To Be Fat Ducks, Satisfied With A World That Is Going To Go Up In Smoke.

God Has Called Us To Be Eagles Soaring Through The Clouds Of Holiness;

Shaking Out The Salt Of A Godly Life;

Shining Out The Light Of The Truth Of Jesus Christ,

And Bringing As Many Men As We Can To Glorify Our Father In Heaven.