



## Salt and Light - Pt1

Matthew 5:13-16

Introduction:

“You are the salt of the earth...” “You are the light of the world...”

Salt and Light are metaphors that Christ employed to describe the nature of a true disciple who is seeking first the Kingdom of God. A true disciple affects the world around him with a positive, Christ centered influence. This influence is personal and corporate. It is personal in that every believer has a sphere of influence that he or she has the potential of affecting for the glory of Christ. It is corporate in that the church at large has the potential, albeit the responsibility to affect their society and culture for the glory of Christ.

Salt and light carry with them the picture of someone who is *living* the gospel and who is *proclaiming* the gospel.

Salt - living the gospel

Light - proclaiming the gospel

Together, these attributes create a potent tool that God uses by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to reach a lost world for Christ.

Text

Matthew 5:13a

“You are the salt of the earth.”

What did Jesus mean by this statement?

Larger Context:

Sermon on the Mount - Matthew 5-7

In the SM, Jesus is proclaiming the truth about the Kingdom of God and exhorting Jews to embrace this truth in word and in deed. All those who do so are promised great reward for “whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:19).

The disciple who is “seeking first the kingdom” (Mt 6:33) is, by his obedience, both preserving society and culture by their faithful life and proclaiming the truth about Christ - the light of the world.

Audience:

The primary audience of the SM is Jesus' disciples (5:1-2). But the teaching, by intention, is also to be heard by a large crowd who has gathered to hear Jesus.

Jesus uses the metaphor of salt to describe the disciple who is seeking the kingdom. In the ancient world, salt had many functions that were of value.

- It was used as a preservative
- It was a necessary part of a person's diet
- It was used to flavor food
- It was used as currency
- It was used in small quantities as fertilizer

All of these could have been illustrative of the value of the believer's role in the world. In this study, the illustration of "salt as a preservative" will be expanded.

In the modern world, we use cold temperatures to slow the decay of meat. In the ancient world salt was rubbed into meat to slow its decay.

Disciples who are actively seeking the kingdom by living out its principles act as a preservative to the moral decay of society. If a believer is living out the principles of Christ's teaching, his Christ-like ethic will have an influence in the society around him. His "good life" will compensate for or keep in check the social ills of people who reject "good" and follow their own passions and lusts.

This is inherent in the phrase we sometimes quote to describe an honest, hard working individual who is contributing to society rather than becoming a burden to society. We describe him as "the salt of the earth."

A major emphasis of Jesus' teaching in the SM is that a true believer not only hears the word of Christ but is obedient to it.

Jesus taught that true disciples can be discerned by their actions: "A good tree bears good fruit but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ...Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them" (Mt 7:17, 20).

Jesus concludes the SM with the statement: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Mt 7:24).

This obedience is not born out of religious ritual or a mere adherence to a moral standard. Jesus condemns such a practice that leads to pride and hypocrisy (6:2, 16) resulting in loss of reward (Mt 6:1) and possible condemnation (Mt 7:23).

Believers, by extension, if they are living out their faith in the culture in which they live, will effectively preserve the good in that culture.

## The Role of the Church in Society and Culture

Left to itself, the natural inclination of man is to indulge his wicked desires and lusts.

James 1:14-15 describes this progression of sin that leads to death.

The source of temptation - Man's own lust

"Temptation" is in present tense, indicating a constant condition.

Man's lust causes him to be "carried away and enticed"

The word translated "carried away" (ἐξέλκω) is a hunting term which pictures a trap that has been baited. The bait attracts the animal in such a way that it is not aware of or ignores the danger of the trap...until it is too late.

"Enticed" (ἐξέλκω) is a fishing term. It pictures a hook that has been baited with the intent of luring a fish.

"his own lusts" (τῆς ἰδίας ἐπιθυμίας) - not just general lusts are in view here but the particular bent of the individual to obtain that which is forbidden. This signifies personal responsibility and culpability.

In the same way, our own lusts within us cause us to be baited into the trap of sin.

What keeps us from continually indulging in sin by the unbridled pursuit of lust?

Law/Consequence

Personal Self-restraint/character

Believer

- Regeneration - 2Peter 1:3-4
- The indwelling Holy Spirit - Rom 8:5-9
- Word of God -

## APPLICATION

What does this look like in life?

### **Salt in the workplace/school** -

Colossians 3:22-24 <sup>22</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the

Lord. <sup>23</sup> Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, <sup>24</sup> since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.

Titus 2:9-10 <sup>9</sup> Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, <sup>10</sup> and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.

### **Salt in the home** - Eph 5:22-25

- Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church
- Wives submit to your husbands as unto Christ
- Children obey your parents

### **Salt in social circles**

James 1:27 <sup>27</sup> Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

- Widow, Orphan, Poor
  - Sponsoring a child (Handclasp, Haiti, etc.)
  - Interfaith Food Bank
  - APHC
  - The Center - Stockton
- Interpersonal relationships

### **Salt in the moral fabric of society**

1 Peter 2:11-12 <sup>11</sup> Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. <sup>12</sup> Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Salt in justice

Salt in government

Matthew 5:13b

**Matthew 5:13** 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.

What does Christ mean here?

More than one interpretation can be concluded here.

Interpretation #1 - Irony

Strictly speaking, salt (sodium chloride) is a stable compound and cannot lose its saltiness. Therefore, Jesus is employing the use of irony by stating a condition that cannot exist. In other words, a true disciple of Christ will always exhibit a lifestyle indicative of the teachings of Christ from a pure heart.

By contrast a false disciple who adheres to religious rules only will be shown for his true nature by his pride and visible hypocrisy. Thus he is worthless in his task of demonstrating the light of truth to men.

This fits the context of the SM but implies a theological difficulty in that true believers also fail to live out the teachings of Christ perfectly.

Interpretation #2 - Illustration

Salt in the ancient world was not always in pure form.

Many times it was a part of a composite of organic material. Salt mixed with certain other organic materials were used to line the flat rooftop of houses. As the salt leached from the composite material the material hardened and became a suitable surface for walking and preventing leaks. Thus, when the organic material lost its saltiness, it's only worth was to be trampled by men.

Also, rocks that contained salt deposits were used to store fish. Over time however, the salt would leach off the rocks thus rendering them unusable for preservation. They would then be cast aside to be "trampled by men."

James 2:14-16 <sup>14</sup> What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? <sup>15</sup> If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, <sup>16</sup> and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?

Romans 2:17-24 <sup>17</sup> But if you bear the name "Jew " and rely upon the Law and boast in God, <sup>18</sup> and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, <sup>19</sup> and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, <sup>20</sup> a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of

knowledge and of the truth, <sup>21</sup> you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? <sup>22</sup> You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? <sup>23</sup> You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? <sup>24</sup> For "THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,"

#### APPLICATION

If believers are not living out the teaching of Christ, we are impotent to fulfill our intended purpose in this world



## Salt and Light - Pt2

Matthew 5:13-16

Matthew 5:14 “You are the light of the world.”

Light is a common metaphor in the OT Scriptures.

God is depicted as the source and giver of light to those who walk in his ways.

Psalm 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation-- whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life-- of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalm 43:3 <sup>3</sup> Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell.

Psalm 56:13 <sup>13</sup> For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

Psalm 89:15 <sup>15</sup> Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD.

Psalm 112:4 <sup>4</sup> Even in darkness light dawns for the upright, for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.

Psalm 119:105 <sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Israel was always depicted as living in the light and Gentiles in the darkness.

APPLICATION: Evangelism in the OT vs. the NT

The Nation of Israel enjoyed the special revelation of God. He rescued them from Egypt and brought them to the land he promised them. If they would walk in the light they were given, they would also be a light to the nations around them. Israel was a privileged nation because of the light shown them. God sent the ultimate light, his Son, to Israel. God gave Israel all the information they needed to be the light, however, they had a history of refusing to walk in this light.

Ultimately, God sent his Son to reveal himself to Israel: the consummate personification of light (Mt 4:12-16 cf. Is 9:1-2). Yet, because of Israel's hardheartedness, they rejected Christ and were thus broken off as the mantle of light to the nations (Rom 9-11; Mt 13:13-15 cf. Is 6:9-10).

So God changed the plan to reach the nations. He now has given the light to anyone who believes in the Son - from all tribes and nations. They, in turn, must take the light out into the world and proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ (Mt 28:19-20).

Meanwhile, this plan is producing jealousy in the nation of Israel that one day they will come back to God and He will restore them to their blessed condition on account of His promises to the patriarchs (Rom 11).

In Matthew 5:14, Jesus calls those who seek the kingdom “the light of the world.”

He uses two illustrations to further explain this metaphor:

Illustration #1: A city on a hill

Illustration #2: A lamp on a lampstand

A City on a hill cannot be hidden - pictures Israel on Mt. Zion, freely observed by all nations

A lamp on a lampstand gives light to all in its proximity - all who come to the lamp will enjoy its light

In the same way...

“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

Our responsibility to take the light to the nations

Romans 10:13-15 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." <sup>14</sup> How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? <sup>15</sup> And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Matthew 28:19-20 go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

There are opportunities everywhere to take the light to a lost world

- Halloween outreach
- Food bank
- AHPC
- The Center in Stockton
- City Team in SF
- Mormons at your door
- 3<sup>rd</sup> World Countries
- Disaster Relief - New Orleans, Haiti, Pakistan
- Building churches in India via Pastor John Francis

- Sponsoring orphans through Jason Nightingale, Don & Kay Fox and similar ministries

The reality is that we are salt and light wherever we go. We need only be prepared to live and proclaim the gospel we hold dear.

- Invite someone to Grace
- Your children's friends
- Hair dresser
- Extended Family
- Ministering to the sick (Ex. Marlene sharing the gospel in a hospital room)
- Mountain Biking - Dale Wiebe
- Coaching
- Home as a beacon of light

Using your interests/talents to invest in the lives of others (some personal examples from my own experience over the years):

- Weight lifting
- Guitar lessons
- Golfing
- Volleyball
- Teaching
- Rock Climbing
- Triathlon training
- Mountain biking
- Youth ministry
- Occupational opportunities

### Equipped to Multiply

The fact is, we must be a ready source of the light God has given us. This is accomplished primarily through the constant study of God's Word with the intention of practicing what we learn and passing it on to others.

#### Example:

When we teach in other countries, the students listen intently while furiously writing down everything we say. The reason for this is that they are out there on the front lines carrying the burden of communicating truth to people in their care. They are listening and being trained with the intent of taking that very message to others in a different context.

In America, it often looks a little different. Some people take notes, some don't even bring Bibles, most listen to a sermon with the purpose of what they alone will receive and judge its relevance accordingly. Most of the time it ends there.

In my undergrad and even graduate education, there are students who do not see the relevance of what they are learning. The goal is to pass the class. When I went back to school to finish my undergrad, I had been in full time ministry for 10 years bearing the burden of teaching God's Word and training students and youth leaders what it means to live a fruitful life. When I heard the teaching of God's Word in Bible College I saw its immediate relevance. I asked many questions and spent hours studying with the intention that I was going to take this training and pass it directly on to those entrusted to my spiritual care.

May this same passion to learn and pass along the Light be in us.