

Matthew 5:13–16

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 21 May 2023

Preacher: Joe Pace

[0 : 00] Matthew 5, 13-16. You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

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. This is the word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God. You may be seated. Good morning. Good to see you this morning.

Good morning. Many of you may know that I grew up in a military household.

[1 : 04] My dad was career Air Force, where the code of conduct and chain of command was very clear. It was a culture where our behavior as children could directly impact our dad's job, his position.

My dad never let us forget it. He would tell us that we were ambassadors, and that when we walked out that door, we represented him and the family name.

Well, I don't mind telling you how many times I submitted my resignation for that ambassador position. No thank you.

Too much pressure. Too much responsibility. Besides, there were many times growing up when I'm sure I didn't represent the family name all that well anyway.

It wasn't until I got older, had kids of my own, that the full weight of my dad's statement really hit me. Here it is. Pace wasn't just my name or what I did.

[2 : 32] Pace was who I was all the time. As we look this morning at the last pillar of our vision statement, to display, meaning to show, to make a prominent exhibition of, to live out, to make easily seen the gospel everywhere, we hope to discover through today's text that same realization, that our call as a Christian, indeed our call as a church, is not just about our name or what we do.

It's who we are all the time. When we walk out those doors, we should naturally, openly reflect him and represent the family name.

Martin Lloyd-Jones famously said, an ambassador from any country is always conscious of the fact that he has a tremendous responsibility because he is the representative by whom his country is going to be judged.

And to us is given the privilege and responsibility of being the representatives of the son of God in this world. We stand for him.

People judge him by what they see in us. And they are perfectly entitled to do so because we are the ones through whom and in whom he is glorified.

[4 : 23] Our text this morning, Matthew chapter 5, verses 13 through 16, which is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, comes at the conclusion of the passage before it called the Beatitudes, which we had a time to look at in our Matthew series a few weeks ago.

In the Beatitudes, Christ lays out the characteristics of those who would be kingdom citizens, the qualities of true disciples.

Here in our text, he outlines how these characteristics should in essence function in the world and have an impact on it.

When we have put on all the elements of this blessed uniformed, outlined in the Beatitudes, this is what it looks like. This is what it produces.

This is how it works. This is what it naturally displays. Jesus, in our text here, uses two metaphors to describe it.

[5 : 33] These also serve as our two primary points for our discussion this morning. Jesus uses salt and light.

Salt and light. The first two words of Matthew chapter 5, verse 13, are crucial. You are. This statement is a description of, not a prescription for. It's not a command or exhortation. Jesus is not challenging his followers to some ideal behavior. Jesus does not say, you should be salt. He does not promise, you will be salt.

Nor does he encourage you to strive for saltiness. He says, you are the salt of the earth.

[6 : 34] In this statement, our function as salt is assumed. Our nature as salt is explicit. To be clear, the fact that Jesus says, salt is what you are, it's an incredibly important point.

The Lord considers who you are to be more important than what you do. And the Lord is only pleased with what you do when it flows out of who you are.

With God, character precedes performance. Why? Salt. Salt.

Sodium. Chloride. Salt. Salt sometimes gets a really bad rap. It's blamed for everything from hypertension to obesity to heart disease.

And it's something my wife hides from me at dinnertime. Its presence on many tables has become merely decorative and some restaurants now make you ask for it specifically before you can get it.

[7 : 48] That's not the case here in our text. In the ancient world, salt was an essential and valuable commodity. The Roman government often paid soldiers their wages in salt.

A good man was said to be worth his salt. A phrase we still use today. Our English word salary comes from the Latin word *salarium* which literally means to trade or barter in salt.

Salt served a wide array of purposes in the ancient world. But there are three primary purposes I'd like to draw to your attention this morning.

first of all salt is a preservative. In the ancient world families didn't have refrigerators or deep freezers to prevent meat from spoiling they packed it in salt.

The salt would slow down the process of spoiling. That's what it means for Christians to be salt of the earth.

[9 : 04] The presence of saints in the world is a sovereign act of restraining grace. We preserve the message of Christ when we act as ambassadors for the gospel.

Continuing to follow and display the example of Christ is a means of maintaining his message in a lost and hurting world.

We are the salt of the earth without which evil would have little or no resistance at all. Secondly salt promotes thirst.

When you intake a lot of salt you become thirsty. That's also what it means for Christians to be the salt of the earth. We ought to live in such a way that we cause people to be dissatisfied with the pleasures of this world and become thirsty for the living God.

Thirdly and probably the most obvious use of salt in both the ancient and modern world is as a flavoring agent.

[10 : 21] Salt provides flavor. flavor. It seasons. It makes things taste better. I believe this is actually the primary point Jesus is making when he says we are the salt of the earth.

The end of this verse supports it when he warns us about the consequences of salt losing its flavor. when we just display the gospel everywhere we become to the earth what salt is to food.

As salt makes food taste better followers of Jesus Christ are to influence this sinful world for the kingdom of God.

We are as it were kingdom condiments. sanctified seasoning. We add godly flavoring to a tasteless world.

When salt just acts like salt salty people can say Psalm 34 8 oh taste and see that the Lord is good.

[11 : 43] continuing here in verse 13 but if salt has lost its taste how shall its saltiness be restored? After describing his followers as the salt of the earth Jesus raises a dilemma.

What if the salt loses its taste or flavor? What do you do if the salt is no longer salty?

Well let's start here for salt to influence the taste of food it must first have intimate contact with the food so much so that the salt dissolves and disappears as it permeates the food but even though salt becomes thoroughly entrenched in the food you still know there's salt in the food because the presence of the salt makes the food taste different.

what use would it be to put salt on food if it tastes no different than the food? What good is salt that's not different?

What good is a Christian is a church that's in the world but looks and tastes no different than the world suppose you accidentally left a steak on your kitchen counter just before leaving on vacation for a few days you would return back home welcomed by a horrendous odor you hold your nose stumble into the kitchen to find the terrible smell and there it is the now rotten piece of meat you left on the counter you don't get mad at the meat for going bad and producing the awful smell exposed meat is only doing what meat does you get mad at yourself for failing to preserve the meat in the refrigerator unfortunately we as

[14:07] Christians often aren't this logical in our response to this sinful world we make plenty of negative comments and think great frustrations over our society gone bad but our culture is simply doing what the culture does instead of asking what's wrong with the culture we should be asking where is the salt why is the church not more effectively preventing decay from setting in look the only way we can make a difference is if our lives demonstrate the difference Jesus makes the Morton salt company based right here in Chicago is the leading producer and marketer of salt in North

America its iconic logo the Morton salt girl and its slogan when it rains it pours was named one of the ten best known symbols in the United States the slogan dates back to the early 1900s when Morton figured out how to produce salt that didn't clump together in humid weather it would pour even in the rain Christ church may that be our testimony even in the rain even when it's hard even through challenging times even when the culture says something different may we continue to pour pour pour like the salt of the earth we are called to be notice still here in verse 13 the severe consequences for losing one's saltiness

Jesus says you're good for nothing to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet some things that lose their original purpose can still be used for other things but you can't do that with salt there's no market for recycled salt unsalty salt is worthless and it certainly wouldn't be the staple common item it is in almost every household today think about that for a moment salt is now a very common ordinary item found in most homes today and God uses that to describe those he uses wow this is great news church God uses salt that is

God uses ordinary things aren't you glad Jesus didn't describe us as the gold of the earth the silver of the earth or the diamonds of the earth most of us wouldn't make the cut but God in his sovereign grace uses ordinary flawed rebellious people like you and me what am I saying you you don't need great talent to be salt you don't need a seminary degree to be salt you don't need a lot of money to be salt you don't need to be from a particular culture or ethnicity to be salt be encouraged to know that God's personnel department has a wide variety of available jobs Jesus told us to be the salt of the earth did you know that there's some 14,000 industrial uses for salt it's a lot of possibilities all God needs of you to use you is all of you if you're here today and have not yet given your life to Christ and accepted him as your personal savior this would be a great day to let him in and allow him to be the Lord of your life you too can be the salt of the earth the second metaphor Jesus uses starting here at verse 14 and probably the one that even more closely embodies this pillar of our vision statement to display the gospel everywhere is this metaphor of light verse 14 you are the light of the world a city on a hill cannot be hidden if salt preserves and seasons then light illuminates and transforms

[19:34] Jesus says you are the light of the world much like with salt in the previous verse Jesus uses this second person declaration here not to command you to become light but to indicate that you are light it's who you are you ever been around someone that seems to light up the room as soon as they walk in okay certainly every husband in this room ought to say amen it though it's been over 20 years ago I remember it just like yesterday the first time I saw my then to be wife walk into the room I stopped and said who is she she didn't come in trying to be something she wasn't she just was who she was and who she was was enough to catch my attention and ultimately changed my life forever this is what light does the church and every redeemed member in it is the light of the world what a wonderful privilege what a awesome responsibility and important stewardship why why the metaphor of light why is light so critical why is displaying the gospel everywhere so important because there's so much darkness in the world when you're in the dark you can't see things aren't clear you trip over little things you bump into other people you run into things hurt yourself you easily get and stay lost in the dark but even more amazing than this the bible tells us that people love the dark john 3 19 says even though the light has come into the world people love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil much like that steak we

talked about earlier that's the nature of the world but church that's all the more reason we've got to keep being light we've got to keep shining we've got to display the gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere let's get some clarity on the nature of this light John 8 Jesus says I am the light of the world here in our text he says to his disciples you are the light of the world okay so how can Jesus be the light of the world and we be the light of the world at the same time well the most simple answer is that we are not the light in and of ourselves Christian light is reflected light it does not originate with us it comes from and through the Lord Jesus Christ it's like the shining sun when the sun sets and the moon comes up the moon doesn't shine with its own light the moon merely reflects the light of the sun in the darkness this is us we as Christians merely reflect the light of the s-o-n in the darkness without Christ we were all in the dark we were the personification of darkness but now with Christ verse Peter 2:9 we are a chosen race a royal priesthood a holy nation a people for his own possession that you may proclaim where have we heard that word before the excellencies of him who called you out of the darkness into his marvelous light you are now light in the Lord you must walk like it live like it the Lord didn't merely change our circumstances he changed us we're not light because we've been so good we're light because God's been so good to us James Montgomery Boyce writes if it is only a question of seeking light or living in the light then Christianity is no different from any other religion or philosophy and there's no more hope from it than from any of them but if becoming a Christian involves a change from darkness to light then the presence of Christians in the world is itself hope as together we stand against the darkness now still in verse 14 Jesus says you are the light of the world a city on a hill that cannot be hidden while living in Kentucky I used to drive back and forth to Nashville to do studio work coming back from Nashville sometimes late at night I would take a road called Bluegrass Parkway this was the most quick and direct route back to Lexington however this also had to be one of the most dark desolate depressing stretches of highway ever created at that time there were no street lights and you knew every scary movie you'd ever seen had to be filmed on Bluegrass Parkway but something happens as you near the end of this near 70 mile stretch of road somewhere way off in the distance you can begin to see the lights of the city and you begin to smile as those lights bring a sense of calm a sense of direction comfort and safety as you get closer this church is what Jesus calls us to be in this dark world the church is a lit up city on a hill that cannot be hidden the church should be able to say like that old Motel Six commercial make your way to Christ Church Chicago we'll leave the light on for you as Kingdom citizens we are a beacon a lighthouse that is clearly set apart from the darkness of this world being a Christian ought not be just some cliché but if you are a Christian you are called to stand up stand out and light up the world as verse 14 says it's impossible to highlight a city on a hill cannot be hidden verse 15 says it's illogical to hide light nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a stand and it gives light to all in the house this scenario is an important warning about our Kingdom influence a city set on a hill speaks to the position God gives us in salvation salvation a light under the basket speaks to the purpose God gives us in salvation here it is simply put God didn't save you to then hide you salt works covertly its power operates even as it disappears into the food but light light works openly this is how the Christian should live in the world we are to live openly consistently and boldly for others to see Jesus in us what tempts you to hide your light have you ever been in a situation where you didn't want anyone to know you were a Christian I grew up even before preaching something we would go to restaurants go out places and somebody would come by and say hey are you a preacher no I'm not a preacher do I look like yeah I guess something I guess I looked like a preacher I grew up in church church church church and I used to be embarrassed because New Year's Eve we had something called watch night service we brought the year in in church and when the kids would ask me what are you doing for New Year's Eve I would come up with something oh we'll be out of town we're going on vacation and they say oh you'll be in church right I wanted to be and do anything other I didn't want anybody to know that I spent every New Year's Eve in church that was old that was stale wanted to be out like them but as a [30 : 24] Christian as one who is brought out of darkness into his marvelous light you have to be light all the time a familiar refrain heard in our house growing up was who left these lights on don't you know these lights cost money but as upset as my parents would get about the lights being left on the Lord God hates it when his children turn their lights off don't let anything make you hide your light here verse 16 it then begins with a command 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 this is no recommendation this is a divine mandate

Jesus commands us to shine as lights there's no imperatives in the salt metaphor back up in verse 13 Jesus seems to trust us to get the point of salt losing its flavor like unsalty salt worldly Christians are spiritually useless but here he doesn't leave it to us to figure out the point of the light metaphor! Jesus explicitly commands us to let our lights shine before others that means it's not enough for us to let our lights shine here on Sunday mornings when all the lights come together for corporate worship we are to let our light shine at all times in every place everywhere we all should be singing this little light of mine I'm gonna let it shine let it shine let it shine let it shine why let it shine Jesus gives a compound answer here first let your light shine before others so that others may see your good works Jesus does not say others should hear our words he says others should see our works yes the Bible does tell us that hearing is essential for salvation but what people hear us say should not be contradicted by what they see us do we must proclaim the truth of Christ and display the love of Christ the world should see our good works and that makes

Christ beautiful to others get the distinction here Jesus doesn't tell us to do things to be seen he tells us that there are things we should be seen doing good works are a key way to go public for Jesus look we don't just stand up and shout at the darkness us we simply walk in the room turn on the lights by showing the mercy of Christ in dark places secondly Jesus says here let your light shine before others so that others may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven here it is this is what it's all about the father's glory others should see your good works but you should not get the credit for what they see yeah

Jeremy this is where we can get into trouble because if we're not careful we'll begin to think the light is for us some of us are just one compliment away from grabbing the spotlight it's not your light you just reflect the light it's the father's light everything you do should always point back to the father your good work should cause others to give glory to your father who is in heaven I tell the praise team I've told others imagine a job that you do so well with such excellence that when you got done with that job nobody remembered you did it that's your call to reflect so brightly and so well that when all is said and done all people saw was the father they don't see you at all

[35 : 50] I had a good friend back in high school yes I do remember back that far this friend wanted nothing more than to be state spelling bee champion he studied for months I would quiz him from time to time his parents neighbors teachers would all pitch in to help him prepare he navigated all the local rounds and the regional rounds made his way to the championship where he actually won I was proud of him his parents were proud the school was proud he himself was beaming with excitement and joy until they gave him this huge trophy for winning first place well

I was impressed with it but for some reason his face changed and he began to look sad offstage we came up to him and said what's wrong with you why on earth would you look so sad and you just won the championship he said yeah I know I won but this trophy is way too big for me to carry around everywhere I go to let people know I'm a champion to which his dad replied son the trophy doesn't make you a champion what's in you makes you a champion champion is who you are and it's written all over your face all you have to do is walk and live like a champion trust me people will see it my friends

Christchurch Chicago you are the salt of the earth you are the light of the world just live like it and display the gospel everywhere people will see it the father will be glorified and we will fulfill our vision let's pray together father we thank you that we get to reflect your light thank you for the calling you've placed on each and every one of us give us the strength the courage the boldness to be and to walk as the salt of the earth and the light of the world you've called us to be

God we don't want people to see us we want people to see you in us God we thank you for this outpost of the kingdom called Christ Church Chicago may we live out this vision statement empower us equip us give us clarity focus strength boldness to build up a multi ethnic and cross cultural church that proclaims Jesus to everyone and displays the gospel everywhere thank you for the privilege to work in your kingdom your son's name we pray and give thanks to people to people to people people!