

Salt & Light

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Date: 17 November 2024

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[0 : 00] If you'd open up your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5, we just got through two months of the Beatitudes. And now, we're going to look at what Jesus says in Matthew chapter 5, verses 13 through 16.

Be in salt and light. It's page 962 and 63 of your Pew Bible. Hear God's Word. You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It's 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. No.

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.

May God bless the hearing of His Word. You know, our nation's top award for soldiers in battle is the Medal of Honor. And it's given to soldiers who have performed, quote, unquote, conspicuous acts of bravery.

[1 : 20] Conspicuous bravery. Courageous acts on the battlefield that are clearly seen and attested to by others.

So when Jesus tells us, You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, He is calling us to live lives of conspicuous godliness.

Conspicuous righteousness. Conspicuous righteousness. Not a righteousness like the Pharisees who sought the praise of man, but the conspicuous godliness of kingdom righteousness.

Kingdom citizens seeking to glorify the Father in heaven through kingdom character that shows up as kingdom conduct.

But it provides quite a contrast to the rest of the world. We are God's salt and light in the midst of a decaying and dark world.

[2 : 28] Here's what I'm going to try to convince you of this morning from what Jesus is saying. God's grace causes us to be distinct from the world in order to glorify God in the world.

God's grace has called us out of the world to be light just to send us back in to glorify our God in heaven. God's grace.

That's why we've called us out of the world to glorify God in heaven. God's grace. God's grace has called us out of the world to celebrate our God. God's grace, to be poor in spirit. No, we would deny our spiritual bankruptcy if it were not for the grace of God.

We used to celebrate sin, but now God's grace helps us to mourn sin. blessed are those who mourn. We used to elevate ourselves over other people thinking that we are better than others, but God's grace, blessed are the meek.

We are humble. We see ourselves in light of who God is. Do you know what happens when a kingdom citizen, a Christian who is possessing a kingdom character like the Beatitudes, lives out conspicuous acts of godliness in a decaying dark world?

[4 : 17] Do you know what happens? Sunlight. God's grace causes us to be distinct from the world in order to glorify God in the world.

And to convince you of that, I want to make four points. Our conspicuous godliness is a supernatural distinction. Our conspicuous godliness is a functional distinction.

Our conspicuous godliness is a glorious distinction. And our conspicuous godliness is not, we can't make this mistake, it's not some dysfunctional indistinction.

We are distinct from the world in order to glorify God in the world. So let's look at this first point. Our conspicuous godliness is a supernatural distinction.

If you look at the passage, in verse 13, Jesus says, he's talking to his disciples and he says, you are the salt of the earth. And then in verse 14, you are the light of the world. And in the original language, that you, you can translate it, you and only you.

[5 : 26] Disciples, those transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of the beloved son. You and only you. Among all the peoples on the earth, of all the people in the world, you and only you are my salt and my light.

Jesus is clearly making a distinction here between those who've been saved by God's grace and everybody else. And this distinction is a supernatural distinction.

These beatitudes are not descriptions of people who have made themselves poor in spirit and pure in heart. No. The beatitudes, the blessedness of the beatitudes is God's grace has come and God's grace has made us poor in spirit.

God's grace has made us pure in heart. God's grace is making us peacemakers and God's grace is what causes us to have a praise and worship time when we are suffering for his sake.

So, I want to start off with this, kind of this conspicuous godliness as a supernatural distinction because we got to be clear on the source of our godliness.

[6 : 38] It's not you, it's not me. It's the grace of God. It's Jesus shining through us. We get a taste of this in Ephesians chapter 2, 1 through 10.

Before Christ, we were dead in our trespasses and sins and we were following the course of the world. We were following the prince of the power of the air. We were living for our flesh, delighting in our sin. We were children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

We were part of the decay. We were living in darkness. That's who we were. And then verse 4 and 5, but God, being rich in mercy with the great love with which he loved us, he made us alive in Christ.

We were dead. He made us alive. By grace, you've been saved. By grace, you've been lit up. By grace, you've been saltified.

And now, verse 10, because we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, made alive in him, well, we do good works now.

[7 : 48] Good works doesn't save us. We are saved for good works, being salt and light. It's this grace of God that took those who were dead in their sin, living in darkness, and made them alive in Christ and lit them up as part of the kingdom of light.

That's who you are. That's what God has done. It's who you are. You're salt and light. He's radically changed your character, and that shows up in your conduct.

But we forget. Paul Tripp calls it gospel amnesia. We're amnesiacs. We roll out of bed, and we forget that we have been radically changed by God's grace, delivered from the domain of darkness, transferred to the kingdom of the beloved Son.

We forget our eternities have changed. We forget that God in the flesh shed his blood for us. We forget we're salt and light.

How do you remind yourself of that? How do you remind yourself every day that you're no longer your own, but you belong to Jesus?

[9 : 10] You can start this way. A daily declaration of devotion where one of your early moves of the day, it's real close to you waking up because we all know how the day goes.

Real close to waking up, you are putting a stake in the ground, and you are saying, Lord Jesus, I am not my own. You've been raining on high all throughout the night.

You were the one who died for me, raised me from the dead so that I can live for you, and I now declare my purpose today is to live for your glory, not my own.

Great way to start the day. And it's recognizing that this conspicuous godliness that we're being called to here, the salt and light, it's got a supernatural distinction.

It's a supernatural source. God, by His grace, has made us distinct from the world in order that we would glorify Him in the world.

[10 : 27] Second point, our conspicuous godliness is a functional distinction. And what I mean by functional is practical. What I mean by functional is it's real. It shows up.

In this passage, just like with everything that Jesus does, He chooses His words very carefully. He's being very intentional here.

So it's not a mistake that He's talking about salt and light. And what salt and light, what they are essentially doing, it's a functional distinction between His people and the rest of mankind.

It's ways of talking about a difference. In fact, I think what He's getting at are two sides of the same coin of conspicuous godliness.

It's about being distinct from the world. So when Jesus talks about salt, do you know what He's talking about? Okay, so you go to festival, you go to Woodman's, you buy some hamburger meat.

[11 : 29] You come back home and you put the hamburger meat where? The refrigerator. Because it's cold. Refrigerator's coldness slows down decay.

It keeps your meat from becoming corrupt, putrefied. But before there were refrigerators, there was salt. And so in order to preserve meat, what they do, they would rub a steak with salt.

Get that salt all in there. Do you know what salt does? It dehydrates moisture in a piece of meat. And why that matters is because bacteria and parasites love the moisture.

And so by dehydrating the moisture, the source of this, of bacteria and parasite is removed. And so you're able to preserve meat.

So if you're picking up on what Jesus is saying, He's saying, you're the salt in the meat of culture. And apart from you, it's just going to decay, moral decay. And we're living in it, gang.

[12 : 44] I'm not sure if anybody in the room would argue that Romans 1 is not in effect. in our culture. God has rubbed us in in order that we would slow the moral decay in our culture.

Our presence, our salty presence slows the decay down. Here's the deal.

If you put, rub salt on a steak, the steak's not going to say, ouch. Because steaks aren't alive. But if we're salt in the living steak of our culture, it's going to sting.

Has anybody had salt put in a wound before? It stings. And what Jesus is saying here is not only going to flavor, you're going to sting.

Here's how that shows up three ways. You ready? You walk to work or you're in school or you're a family gathering and people start to gossip.

[13 : 57] And your gossip alarm goes off. You're like, this isn't good. So, as salt, you get to say something like this. You know what? I can't do this.

I can't participate in this. If you have a problem with someone, you need to go and talk to them about it, not talk about them to others. Do you know what will happen with those people right there you just told that to?

Sting! Ouch! Who are you to tell me that? But you're slow in a decay.

We want to use our speech to build up, not to tear down. Or let's take abortion. Abortion. We will not discriminate people based upon the color of their skin.

We're all image bearers, right? Whether you're brown, whether you're black, whether you're yellow, red, white, we're not going to discriminate based upon your racial classification or based upon your gender or based upon what neighborhood you live in.

[15 : 11] Right? We're not going to discriminate on the basis of that because everybody's an image bearer. And we cannot discriminate whether or not someone is a human or not if they're in the womb or out of the womb.

They're an image bearer in the womb and out of the womb. And when we say things like that, you can catch some heat for that. But it's slowing something down in our culture.

the taking of lives. Or how about this? You get invited to your nephew's gay wedding.

You're torn because if you don't go, you know that it's going to create relational tensions across the board. But if you do go, you're thinking something doesn't seem right about this.

And so you seek counsel and the issue becomes crystal clear. God does not recognize a marriage between two men and two women.

[16 : 19] That is not a wedding in God's eyes. In fact, that's grievous in God's sight. And so you start realizing, I can't go because I can't celebrate something that is grievous in God's eyes.

in my devotion to God is more important than maintaining the peace in a network of relationships. You're going to catch heat for that. It's going to sting people.

And it might come back on you and when you start getting reviled for that and start people selling all sorts of falsehoods because of that, it's praise and worship time.

It's praise and worship time because Jesus is worth it. There's a reward waiting for you in heaven and you're in good company. Salt has a function, a distinct function and it's to slow decay.

As salt of the earth, you're to slow decay. It's going to come at risk. But Jesus also says we're the light of the world.

[17 : 35] Not just salt, we're light. And we know from our Bibles that light, especially Ephesians 5, talks about when you were saved, you were delivered from the domain of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light.

Your children of light walk in the light. So no longer do we kind of participate in works of darkness. We expose them. So there's this exposing nature of light. But Jesus talks about light in this passage as good works.

Look at verse 16. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works. So the rays of the kingdom, they shine through us as good works.

light. And so where salt is a preservative, it slows decay, light, according to Jesus here, is revealing God's good ways.

It's a goodness. The rays of the kingdom shining through our work. Now you might be asking, well, what does that look like?

[18 : 43] What are the good works? Jesus shows us in the Sermon on the Mount. If you look at 5, chapter 5, verse 21 through 26, he talks about good works as not kind of getting angry and fighting with one another, but pursuing reconciliation with one another.

In chapter 5, verses 43 through 48, the good works that Jesus about, kingdom good works, the conspicuous acts of godliness of a kingdom citizen is not hating your enemy, it's loving your enemy and praying for them.

Now that will get somebody's attention. Furthermore, if you look at chapter 6, verses 19 through 24, some more conspicuous acts of godliness, it's not storing up treasures on earth, it's storing up treasures in heaven because your God is Jesus, not mammon.

Conspicuous acts of godliness. Good works. In chapter 6, verses 25 through 34, we, brothers and sisters, live in an anxious culture.

Highly anxious. anxious. And Jesus says, hey, let this light shine where you're not anxious but seeking first the kingdom, you have this settledness knowing that your God is going to take care of you.

[20 : 25] These are the good works. John 13, Jesus says to his disciples, a new commandment I give to you, you love one another just as I have loved you, you are to love one another and everyone will know that you're my disciples if you have love for one another.

Do you know what this means, brothers and sisters? Our love for one another as members of this church, it is a corporate shining.

It's this corporate good we do where we love one another. salt is a preservative where light is a revealer.

Reveals good works of kingdom citizens who've been radically changed by God's grace. So in both salt and light, there are these conspicuous acts of godliness that make for a functional distinction from the rest of the world.

It's where it shows up. And there's no denying it. We are functionally distinct from the world in order to glorify God in the world.

[21 : 44] Point three. Our conspicuous godliness is a glorious distinction. Looking back at Matthew 5, 16, we see, 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.

God uses our saltiness and God uses our shininess in order to bring glory to his name. The goal of these good works is God's glory.

In other words, when people see our good works, and you're like, why are you doing that? We don't say, because I'm great, we say, the Christ-shaped life you see in me, that's God at work in me.

That's his grace changing me. You're just giving credit. You're just citing your source. That language there, when Jesus says, so that they may see your good works, for some of you, that might make you a little uncomfortable because you know what Jesus has said to the Pharisees.

If you flip in your Bibles to Matthew 23, Jesus goes into a series of woes, not blessedness, woes on the Pharisees.

[23 : 22] And in chapter 23, verse 5, Jesus says of these things, they do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts, and best seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the marketplaces, and being called rabbi by others.

So what we have here is the Pharisees want to be seen by others, and here Jesus is saying, you're the light of the world, you need to be seen by others.

What's going on here? The issue isn't being seen by others. The issue is why you want to be seen by others.

The motive of being seen by others. The Pharisees wanted to be seen by others. Their version of righteousness was designed for self-glory.

To draw your attention to them. To be esteemed. To be well thought of. To get as many likes as possible. But Christians practice conspicuous acts of kingdom righteousness, not to, like, be worshipped, but for God to be glorified.

[24 : 43] We're salt and light for the glory of God. Has anybody seen the moon the last couple nights? Phenomenal.

So I texted the moon last night. Beep, beep, beep, beep, beep. Hey, moon, you look great. Very brilliant. I hope you're well. Bing, bing.

Comes back. Thanks. Period. That would be a mistake of the moon. What if I said, hey, you look great tonight, moon. I hope you're well.

And the moon responds to me by saying, yeah, just to be clear, the brilliance you see is not my own brilliance. It's the sun's brilliance on me.

I'm just reflecting the brilliance of the sun. We've got to be clear on the source of our brilliance, of our glory. As Christians, our good works don't bear witness to us.

[25 : 45] Our good works bear witness to the glorious grace of God who can change people. How do you go from seeing good works to glorifying our Father in heaven?

Is there a, it seems like Jesus is kind of missing a step here. What is he assuming here? For someone to see your life and to see kind of what God is doing in you and then to give glory to our Father in heaven, what needs to happen?

We need to say something. That's what needs to happen. Our good works plus a gospel word will bring glory to God.

Let me show you how that works. Let's say someone comes up to you and they say, you know what, I've noticed that when everybody attacks you, you don't attack them back, but you're kind to them.

Now you could say at that point, yeah, you know, it's just in the home I was raised in and I'm just a nice person. That would be a mistake because now you get to speak a gospel word.

[26 : 56] You can say something like, you know what, I can't take credit for that because there was a time where I'd attack people back, but God's grace in me has changed me and so I'm actually trying to love my enemies there.

And then that person can say, wait, hold on a second, God does that in people and now we're on our way to glorifying our God in heaven. Or your work group is under the knife, under the axe and everybody in your work group at work, they're living in anxiety.

They're like, I don't know if we're going to have our job next week. But they notice you, you're not flipping out, you're actually marked by joy. And they're like, come up to you, hey, why aren't you flipping out?

And you're like, well, you know what, I am just temperamentally an even-keeled person. That would be a mistake because if you, in fact, have been crying out to God and saying things, I'm trying to seek first your kingdom, God, would you meet all of our needs?

And you have this settled assurance that he will. You get to sell people, you know, that's God's grace at work in me because normally I would be flipping out right now.

[28 : 10] And now people can be like, wait, what? God does that in human beings? And you're like, yeah, if you can do it for me, he can do it for you. Now, if you want more information on how to actually share the gospel of Jesus with people, I would recommend Greg Gilbert's book, What is the Gospel?

Short little book, very helpful, and it hits four points, God, sin, Christ, and respond, very helpful. What I want to make sure you're seeing, though, is that the glory of the salt and the light is not the salt and the light.

The glory of the salt and the light is our God. There's two mistakes. One is the hypocrisy mistake. That's where you speak a good gospel word, but there is no good works to substantiate it.

You say, God is good. He changes lives. But your life's a mess in the sense of like, okay, Jesus loves his enemies, but you are hating yours.

People will hear that and they'll be confused by it. Like, what? Jesus doesn't make a difference in your life. You're like everybody else. So the first mistake here is some kind of hypocritical mistake.

[29 : 35] The second mistake is the plagiarism mistake. Plagiarism is when someone will write something and they'll use somebody else's ideas or words and they won't give them credit for it.

And so people, the audience of the person who's written something or speaking about something, they will draw the conclusion that, oh, this is their stuff. It's academic kind of falsehood.

It's a lack of integrity. And when God is at work in us and we don't give him credit for it, it's a theological lack of integrity. We're not giving him credit.

We've got to cite our source. We've got to say, what you're seeing in me is not my doing. It is God's grace at work in me.

I'm not the son. I'm the moon. I'm glad you're noticing. I've got to give credit to where credit's due. Kingdom character, the beatitudes, show up in kingdom conduct being salt and light.

[30 : 46] And when there is a word of the kingdom added at just the right time, God gets the glory and then God's kingdom expands. We're not the sun.

We're the moon. We're his salt and light. And he has called us to be distinct from the world in order to glorify him in the world.

ours is a reflective glory. Which brings me to the last point. Our conspicuous godliness cannot be confused with dysfunctional indistinction.

In this passage, Jesus actually provides a couple warnings. I'm sure you picked up on it. You're the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It's good for nothing. Jesus says of light, a city on a hill cannot be hidden. It defeats its purpose.

[32 : 07] You don't light a lamp and then put it under a basket. It defeats its purpose. Salt is meant to be salty. It's its purpose. It's a preservative. Do you know how the church loses its saltiness?

It's... By becoming like the world. We become indistinct from the world when we love the world and want to be like the world.

You see, worldliness in the church is a dysfunction in the church. It grieves God. It's... You're living not who you were meant to be.

Salt and light. To be distinct from the world. So instead of being distinct from, we... We're... End up being part of the decay.

It's not God's design for us. Have you lost your saltiness because of worldliness? Are you trying to store up treasures on earth thinking that that is going to give you security?

[33 : 27] Are you kind of imbibing entertainment without discernment and content and volume just like the world? Are you living in anxiety just like the world?

Does your family schedule look like the world's family schedules? does your conversations...

Do they... What do they smell like? Life or death? Do you know how to become salty again if you've...

If you're feeling the encroachment of worldliness? Do you know how you become salty again? You turn from worldliness and you turn to God's grace.

You treasure Jesus above all else and he will saltify you. It's just a matter of time after treasuring Jesus with everything you've got.

[34 : 31] It's just a matter of time before the conspicuous acts of godliness start showing up. Just a matter of time. When it comes to the light of the world, in verses 14 and 15, I think Jesus is moving not to talking about worldliness as so much he's talking about something else.

Hiddenness. Hiding. Covering up. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Back in the first century, you have a city on a mountain.

At night, it's lit up and there's no denying it. You cannot ignore that. It can't be hidden. It would be defeating its purpose. Or, you don't light a lamp and then put it under a basket.

No. Cities on hills are high up. Lamps are to be put on lampstands high up and they give light to all.

that they're to be seen. Christian, salt of the earth, light of the world, are you hiding who you are?

[35 : 52] are you ashamed to cite the glorious source of your good works?

When was the last time you spoke the word Jesus in the presence of a non-Christian? solution. This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine.

This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. I'm not going to put a bushel on it. No, I'm going to let it shine. I'm not going to put worldliness over it. No, I'm going to let it shine.

I'm not going to let fear of man be a basket over my light. Nope, I'm going to let it shine. I'm not going to let shame of what other people think about me because I'm a follower of Jesus.

I'm not going to let that hide my light. Don't hide, Christian. Shine, Christian.

[36 : 59] You were saved for. God's grace has made you distinct from the world. God's grace has made me in order so that you would glorify God in the world.

Do you know how to stop hiding your light? You admit your fear and shame to the light of the world, Jesus.

You say, forgive me, Lord Jesus, for being fearful of what other people think about me. In light of what you have done on my behalf. I am really sorry.

And then you start praying prayers like this. God, would you light me up? Would you show me your glory? Would you help me to treasure you above all else?

Would you be the controlling center of my life? Would you be my one consuming passion, my all-governing reality? And out of the overflow of your heart, your mouth will speak.

[38 : 11] I can't take credit for that. That's God's grace in me. All glory to his name. God has saved us by his grace, called us out of the world.

He has made us salty and lit us up to send us back into the world for the glory of the name of Jesus. Distinct from, to bear witness to.

Coming off the Beatitudes, Jesus describes our distinct relationship to the world as being salt and light.

We are supernaturally distinct. It's by his grace that's the source of our saltiness, the source of our brilliance. We are a functional distinction.

We slow the moral corruption, the sinful corruption in our culture, and we shine. We reveal God's goodness. And we are gloriously distinct.

[39 : 17] We cite our source. We don't plagiarize. We say, it's his doing, not mine. I'm a moon. He's the sun. And we say no to the dysfunction of indistinction.

We don't blend in. We stand out. We say no to worldliness. We say no to the fear of man. We say no to shame. God has made us distinct from the world so that we would glorify God in the world.

And it's our privilege. Let's pray together. God in heaven, whether we live in the city of Kenosha or we live in Union Grove, we live in Africa, you have graciously and radically changed us from the inside out.

And now we get to be your salt and light. Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world. You are the great sun of our solar system.

And now it's our joy to reflect your glory, to live out the good works you've called us to and prepared for us, so that more and more people would come to see you and trust you and live for you and for who you are.

[40 : 41] In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.