

AM Matthew 5:1-16

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[0 : 00] The Bible to Matthew and chapter 5, Matthew's Gospel and chapter 5, to the portion known commonly as the Sermon on the Mount.

Containing the statements of blessedness which the Lord Jesus has made on certain people. We're going to read that section plus the next section, verses 13 to 16.

But we'll begin at chapter 5 and verse 1. Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain. And when he had sat down, his disciples came to him.

And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

[1 : 23] Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are the people who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Blessed are the people of God. Blessed are the people of God. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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.

[2 : 33] 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.

Amen. Let us pray once more. With me again to Matthew chapter 5. The kingdom of God. The kingdom of heaven.

Which you notice is mentioned at the beginning and end of the Lord's Beatitudes. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Verse 3. And then in verse 10.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

This kingdom, this kingdom of God, this kingdom of heaven has come with the person of the king, the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

[3 : 45] He is the king of God's kingdom. And where he is, there is God's kingdom. And his people who belong to his kingdom are blessed.

Blessed. They are blessed in a multitude of different ways, as the Lord has made clear in these Beatitudes at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount.

They are blessed in this life. And they are going to be blessed even more fully in the life to come.

But those blessings of the life to come have already begun.

At least in part, in some measure, in some degree, in the present. His people are different from the people of this world.

And that difference between the people of the kingdom of God and the people of this world. That difference brings opposition.

[4 : 53] Which can often lead to bitter persecution. But that difference also, at the same time, leads to transformation and change.

You are the salt of the earth, the Lord Jesus says to his disciples. And there are three things that we need to note about this statement.

This illustration that the Lord uses of his people in the world. They are the salt of the world. What does salt do? As we were trying to tell the children, salt, first of all, preserves.

It holds back corruption. It preserves the usefulness of things like meat and fish. Christians are the salt of the earth.

They preserve society from decay and from going totally rotten. And in spite of opposition, they carry on that work by their very being.

[6 : 04] By their very presence. By who they are. Sometimes we say, or use the expression, you know, rubbing salt into the wounds.

And that is an expression, I suppose, that reminds us of the purifying nature of salt. It stings as it purifies.

It smarts. It causes pain. And in the world, the salt of the earth. These Christian people, as the Lord has already strongly indicated in that final beatitude, which he expands over those two or three verses from verse 10.

You, as the salt of the earth, are going to know opposition and persecution. Blessed are you, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely. You, being the salt of the earth, are going to be the cause of opposition and even persecution.

[7 : 29] The salt is being rubbed, if you like, into the wound. And it's smarting. It's painful. It creates an angry reaction. But that doesn't stop the salt from being salt and acting like salt in holding back the corruption and decay that unbridled sin would cause.

This is what the Lord would have us to be. This is what we are when we come to faith in Jesus Christ.

A Christian is the salt of the earth. He doesn't say, you will be the salt of the earth or you must be the salt of the earth. But you simply are.

This is what you are as a Christian believer. As someone in whom the holy God dwells by his Holy Spirit.

That's going to have an impact, an effect upon those around. Your very presence will hold back sin.

[8 : 43] Will check the progress of sin. You will have a sanctifying effect upon those around you. You are the salt of the earth.

The second thing about salt is that it seasons. It seasons. It adds flavour. It enhances the taste of food. It gives zest to a meal.

And likewise, Christians are to make this world a better place. By their teaching. By their actions. And by their example.

Do we not see this so plainly illustrated in the scriptures? Do you remember how the apostle Peter spoke about the Lord Jesus?

I think it was to Cornelius when he brought the gospel to that gathering of Gentile people. In the Acts of the Apostles. And he spoke about Jesus.

[9 : 45] He introduced Jesus by saying this. That Jesus went about doing good. Jesus went about doing good.

And healing all who were under the power of the devil. For God was with him. And so forth. But that's how he begins. That's how he summarises. Or that's how Luke summarises Peter's sermon. Telling these people about the saviour of the world. When Jesus came into the world. He went about doing good.

And when you think of the gospels in those terms. You can rhyme off, I'm sure, from your memory. Many, many things Jesus did that brought help and blessing to those in the world.

You think of the early church and how they were so anxious to care for the poor and needy among their number. Do you remember how this was such a great work and developed so rapidly that a dispute arose between the Greek-speaking widows and the Aramaic-speaking widows.

[11 : 04] And there was a kind of tension there because of a little bit of jealousy. Oh, they're getting more than we're getting. Or we're being ignored and they're getting everything.

But the point is that there was a great care and concern. That the poor and the needy, those who couldn't fend for themselves, would be looked after. That good would be done to them.

And the church was concerned for the good, for the welfare of the widows within their number. And you remember how Paul, at a later point in the New Testament history, gives Timothy a good number of instructions about how to care for those who are truly in need within his first pastoral epistle to that young minister.

And then there's another occasion in the Acts of the Apostles, which is very moving. When Peter was down at Lydda, in a neighboring town of Joppa, there was a widow who was a marvelous Christian lady.

Her name was Tabitha or Dorcas. And she became ill and she died.

[12 : 24] And the Christians there were so upset that they heard that Peter was in a neighboring town. So they sent for Peter. Perhaps Peter could come and as an apostle, just perhaps God would be kind and raise this lovely Christian lady back to health and strength.

Well, back to life. And that's exactly what happened. But before it happened, remember how the disciples spread out all the wonderful garments and clothes that Tabitha had made with her own hands for the poor of the people of Joppa?

Here was a lady who devoted her time to the welfare and good of others. And then, of course, you remember in the New Testament, we've got those many references to the collections that the apostles, especially the Apostle Paul, wanted to raise amongst the Gentile churches for the benefit of the Jewish believers back in the land of Palestine, who were suffering because of a great famine that had struck that part of the world.

And so he encouraged the churches every Lord's Day, the first day of the week, set aside a certain amount of money. And then when I come, there won't be a mad scramble to raise funds in order to send that with me for the relief of the saints in Judea.

So there was an organized collection for the well-being of those in great need. And you remember how James says in his letter at the end of chapter 1 what true religion really is.

[14 : 24] It's, what does he say? It's caring for widows and orphans in their affliction and keeping oneself unstained from the world.

And that verse very helpfully summarizes not only this second aspect of salt. Salt is something that gives zest to life, that seasons life, that adds flavor, that does good.

But salt is also something that prevents corruption from taking place. And James here at the end of James chapter 1 speaks about these two aspects, doesn't he?

True religion. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God. Is this, to visit orphans and widows in their affliction.

And to keep oneself unstained from the world. Keep oneself pure. Have salt in yourself, as the apostle says, in another place.

[15 : 30] And that leads us to a third thing that we ought to remember. As we meditate upon the Lord's word, you are the salt of the earth. He says that there's a danger facing us.

And he puts it in these words. But if salt has lost its taste, how shall salt, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

If salt ceases to be salt, if it loses its taste, if it loses its distinctiveness, if it loses its unique properties and character, if it stops being salt, holding back corruption, adding seasoning and zest to life, then it's useless.

It's no longer fit for purpose. It will be thrown away, discarded. Because it's no longer of any value. And the application to the church is clear and obvious, surely. If we were to have an impact in this world, then we must remain different from the world.

[17 : 09] We must remain salt. We must keep our taste. This is what you are, the salt of the earth.

Be what you are. For this is how the Lord Jesus Christ, King Jesus, the one who is inheriting or has inherited all the promises made to David in the Old Testament Scriptures.

He is God's anointed king. Great David's greater son. He's going to have universal dominion.

Peoples from all nations are going to worship him and bow before him and serve him.

How is that going to happen? How is Jesus going to conquer the nations? Not by force of arms. Not by using worldly methods.

Instead, he's going to pick up the salt of the earth and he's going to sprinkle it and shake it over the nations.

[18 : 26] He's going to use his own people. What are his own people like? They are the poor in spirit. They are those who mourn.

They are the meek. They are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. They are the merciful. They are the pure in heart. They are the peacemakers. And yes, they are the ones who are being persecuted.

But even so, in the midst of it all, they are the ones who are still the salt of the earth. Who are still holding back corruption where they are. And whose presence adds a zest and seasoning to this world.

And through that influence, that double influence, the Lord Jesus is going to build his church and add to it people who were once corrupt and putrefying in the sight of God.

Whose righteousness were his filthy rags. God's going to bring them into his kingdom. So that they will join the poor in spirit.

[19 : 44] And those who mourn over sin. And the meek. And those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. And so forth. And so on. This is how the Lord Jesus influences people and wins people and saves people.

And there is a wonderful insight into this. If you follow the Robert Mermichian daily reading calendar.

One of the readings for this past few days has been 1 Peter. The first letter of Peter. And I was struck while thinking about the topic for this morning's sermon.

Of what he writes in 1 Peter chapter 3. And turn to it with me. Because remember Peter was one of those disciples who heard this sermon on the mount being preached the first time round.

By a much, much infinitely better preacher than what you are hearing this morning. He heard it. He was there. And it made an impact on his life that he never forgot.

[20 : 53] And here in 1 Peter chapter 3. Many, many decades later. He's writing to Christians scattered throughout the pagan Middle East.

And he speaks to wives. And he speaks to husbands. And then he speaks more generally. But let me just read this. This is how the salt works.

This is how it works. Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands. So that even if some do not obey the word. They may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives.

When they see your respectful and pure conduct. Do not let your adorning be external. The braiding of hair. The braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry.

Or the clothing you wear. But let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart. With the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit.

[21 : 52] Which in God's sight is very precious. For this is how the holy woman who hoped in God. By submitting to their own husbands.

As Sarah obeyed Abraham. Calling him Lord. And you are her children. If you do good. And do not fear anything that is frightening.

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives. In an understanding way. Showing honor to the woman. As the weaker vessel. Since they are heirs with you.

Of the grace of life. So that your prayers may not be hindered. Finally, all of you. Have unity of mind. Sympathy. Brotherly love.

A tender heart. And a humble mind. Do not repay evil. For evil. Or reviling. For reviling. But on the contrary.

[22 : 47] Bless. For to this you were called. That you may obtain a blessing. For whoever desires to love life. And see good days. Let him keep his tongue from evil.

And his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil. And do good. Let him seek peace. And pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous.

And his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those. Who do evil. Now who is there to harm you.

If you are zealous. For what is good. But. Even if you should suffer for righteousness sake. Listen to the echoes of the Sermon on the Mount. Even if you should suffer for righteousness sake.

You will be blessed. Have no fear of them. Nor be troubled. But in your hearts. Honor Christ the Lord. As holy. Always being prepared.

[23 : 48] To make a defense. To anyone who asks you. For a reason. For the hope that is in you. Yet. Do it. With gentleness. And respect.

Having a good conscience. So that when you are slandered. Those who revile your good behavior in Christ. May be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good.

If that should be God's will. Than for doing evil. So this is how. It's all worked out in practice. In the home.

You can imagine there. A Christian. Wife. With an unbelieving husband. How a Christian husband. Should live. With regard to his wife.

And then. Generally speaking. As Christians. Husbands. Wives. Young people. Living in the world. How should you live. Here. It is all worked out.

[24 : 48] In. Some detail. These are the principles. That Peter had learned. From his Lord and master. When he. Went up onto that mountain. And sat down.

And opened his mouth. And began to teach them. You're the salt. Of the earth. Be. What you are. Be what you are.

Where the Lord has placed you. Be salt. Have salt in yourselves. Don't lose your flavor. Don't lose that distinctive taste.

Don't become like the world. It is. A lie. And a deceit. To say. That we need to be like the world. In order to win the world. We need to be salt.

And if that causes. Opposition. So be it. Because salt. The salt of the earth. Will be used by the Lord.

[25 : 45] Not only to hold back corruption. But to add. That. Seasoning. And. Life giving zest. That only. Can be found.

In salt. The salt. And then the Lord. And I won't. Take too long in this. But. The Lord says. You're not only the salt.

Of the earth. But you're the. Light. Of the world. The light. Of the world. And the light. Cannot be hidden. As the children.

Very well. Told me. When the light shines. The darkness. Disappears. The light. Cannot be hidden. The Lord uses.

Two illustrations. In speaking. About the light. He speaks. About. The city. That is set. On a hill. It's in a prominent. Place. Perhaps. He had in mind. Jerusalem. Itself. Set.

[26 : 41] Among the mountains. It draws the eye. It cannot be hid. It's there. It's obvious. It's clear. Everyone can see it. City on a hill.

Cannot be hidden. The second illustration. Is of someone. Taking. Out. The. The lamp. Lighting it. And then. Doing something that. Nobody would expect. Him to do. And that would be. To hide it under a. A basket. Or under a bed. That's not what you do.

When you light a lamp. When you take a light. Lamp out. It is because the darkness is coming. And you need light. And everybody in the house. Needs light. So you. Light the lamp. And you set it on a stand. On a prominent place.

So that it gives light. That's the purpose of light. To give light. To expel. The darkness. The application. Jesus makes.

[27 : 45] Is so simple. And straightforward. Let your light. So shine. Before men. That they may see. Your good works. And glorify.

Your father. Who is in heaven. You're the light of the world. The Lord has put you. Where you are. You're like a city.

Set on a hill. You're like a lamp. That's been lit. And put on a stand. So that others may see. That light. You're the light of the world.

God has put you. Where you are. So that others might see. Be brought out of darkness.

That they might see. And see clearly. That they might learn. And understand. And that in turn.

[28 : 42] The sight. The vision. The understanding. Might lead. To worship. That they might glorify. Your father. Who is in heaven. That speaks to me.

Of conversion. People coming to faith. Because they've seen the light. The light. In your life. Because you're a Christian.

Because Christ has saved you. This is what it's all about. Will there be opposition? Yes there will. Will there be transformation?

Yes there will. This is the Lord's purpose. And the Lord always accomplishes his purpose. So both are true.

Both are realities. Both are certainties. Opposition. Transformation. Persecution. Salvation.

[29 : 40] Salvation. Death is at work in us. That life might be at work in you. Says the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians. And that's the principle isn't it? A principle that we see.

Perfectly modeled. In the coming. Into this world of the Lord Jesus Christ. Death and suffering was at work in him. That life might be at work.

In a multitude of others. Will you think of the parable of the sower. Which is told by the Lord Jesus. And recorded in Matthew chapter 13. And this can be helpful.

If you look at it in these terms. Not all the seed. Bears fruit. Perhaps not even most of the seed. Bears fruit. But here's the thing. Some of the seed. Will always bear fruit. And that.

[30 : 39] Can be fruit. To various degrees of fruitfulness. A hundred fold. Sixty fold. Thirty fold. So you're the salt of the earth.

And you're the light of the world. And the Lord Jesus is saying to us. Be what you are. Be what you are. Don't be what you're not.

Don't try to be something else. Certainly don't be like the world. Remember your salt. Remember your light.

And carry on being what you are. The apostle Paul. Applied this principle. To the Corinthians. After explaining to them.

The nature of the resurrection. And the resurrection body. In 1 Corinthians 15. And he says. Therefore my beloved brethren. Be steadfast. Unmovable.

[31 : 42] Always abounding. In the work of the Lord. Knowing. That your labor. In the Lord. Is not. In vain. It's not in vain.

Or what he says. To the Galatian churches. In Galatians 6 verse 9. He says. And let us not grow weary. In doing good. For in due season.

We will reap. If we do not give up. So then. Let us. As we have opportunity. Do good to everyone. Do good to everyone. Especially to those. Who are of the household. Of faith. You're the salt of the earth. You're the light of the world.

Have salt. In yourselves. Keep yourselves. In the love of God. As. The apostle Jude. Wrote. To his readers. And also.

[32 : 45] Isn't it interesting. That the Lord Jesus himself. In John chapter 8. Said. I am the light of the world. And then he says. In the sermon on the mount. You are the light of the world.

His light. Comes from within himself. As we saw. In the transfiguration. Where. He was transfigured. And this divine. Glorious light. Shone. From within him. This was. A display.

Of his divine. Glory. The glory of God. In Jesus Christ. He is the light of the world. The light of the world. You are the light of the world.

But not in the same sense. Only as we reflect. His light. And his glory. If Jesus Christ.

[33 : 52] Is the son of righteousness. We are like. The moon. That reflects. The light. Of the sun. So as we.

Are united to him. By faith. As we. Daily. Commune with him. In our worship. And in our prayers. And in our bible reading.

We will reflect. His glory. And may. He have the glory.

Which is. His purpose. In keeping us. In this world. That others. Might believe. Through our witness. And testimony.

May. Let us pray. Our God. And father. In heaven. We. Praise you. For our savior. We praise you.

[34 : 51] For him. Who is. The light. Of the world. We thank you. That he has shone. Upon us. And given us. His light. He has opened.

Our eyes. And we have seen. His glory. And we have. Believed in him. And we have put our. Soul. In his hands. And we.

Have experienced. His. Saving grace. We pray. That you would. Help us. To be. What you have made us.

Salt of the earth. And the light of the world. That we may. Live for your glory. And that others. Seeing our good works.

May glorify. Not us. But our father. Who is in heaven. Get glory. For your name. We pray. In this. World. We ask.

[35 : 45] In Jesus name. Amen.