



He's coached at several different universities as both an assistant coach as well as a head coach. In fact, I think he was the wide receivers coach in the mid-90s for the Gophers.

[ 4 : 01 ] Some of you would be able to check that and know that. But in 2012, he became a head coach at the University of Texas A&M.; And in his very first year at Texas A&M;, he had the opportunity to go up against number one ranked Alabama.

On that particular season, they were number one ranked in the nation and they were beating opponents by an average of 19 points a game. The tide was indeed rolling over everybody they played.

And Coach Sumlin knew that his players were going to be intimidated, that they were going to feel overmatched. And so what he did is he gathered his players before the game in the locker room and he told them a story, something that happened to him when he was a little boy.

He told them how his father used to every single day give him \$1 for his lunch. Oh, how prices have changed since then.

Amen. But he would give him \$1 for his lunch. And the coach said, back then I was not a very big boy. I was a very small man, very small boy.

[ 5 : 17 ] And when I went on the school bus, there was bullies there that would pick on me and make fun of me and they would steal every day my lunch money. And I wouldn't be able to eat that day.

And this went on for several weeks until finally he told his dad what was taking place. And he said, I'll never forget what my father did is he took out his wallet and he took out five \$1 bills, enough money to eat lunch for that whole week.

He handed them to me and he said, son, here's \$5. Either learn to stand up for yourself or starve.

The coach got done telling that story and the players moved from their gathering to their locker. And when they opened up the locker door, guess what the coach had taped inside of every single one of their lockers?

Five \$1 bills. The coach was trying to say to them what his father had said to him when he was young. That there comes a point in life when you've got to decide, are you going to stand up or shrink back?

[ 6 : 38 ] There comes a point in life when you have to decide, are you going to stand up or shrink back? And guess what? Evidently that speech worked because Texas A&M; went out and pulled the improbable upset as they beat the number one ranked Alabama Crimson Tide.

And all God's people said, amen and glory to God, right? Now, listen, Faith Amy, I start with that because most of us can relate to that kind of situation.

What I mean here is that all of us know that temptation. We know that tendency to want to back down, to want to retreat, to want to give up in the face of conflict.

Maybe for you, like Kevin, it was a bully at school that you would try to hide from. Maybe for some of you today, you work for a very intimidating boss that terrifies you.

Maybe you're in a very unhealthy relationship where a spouse is very verbally strong towards you and intimidates you. Maybe you've played sports and when you played sports, you always looked across the way and the other team was bigger than you and faster than you and it terrified you.

[ 7 : 59 ] Maybe this is just, and this is true for some of you, maybe this is just your normal approach to conflict in general. You retreat and shrink back. But whatever it is, most of us have felt the desire at some point to do this.

All of us know that feeling. Let's just run away.

Let's just hide. Let's retreat. And that's exactly what Jesus is teaching against in these verses.

Let me show you. First, notice the metaphors here of salt and light. Jesus uses two metaphors in the passage that we just read that's very familiar to us.

In fact, if you're here and you've not really been a part of church much, we're thankful that you're here, excited that you're here. But you probably know this passage even if you're not all that familiar with the Bible.

[ 8 : 59 ] You've heard somebody say, she is the salt of the earth. Or how many of you have heard the little children's story, this little light of mine? I'm going to lead the choir.

I'm going to let it shine. Yeah. Well, all of those expressions come from this passage. It's a very famous passage. But what does it mean? Let's break it down. First, the metaphor of salt.

Verse 13. Now, keep in mind, Jesus here is teaching the disciples.

Now, we'll find out later that others are listening in. But his primary teaching here is to the disciples. And so, I can imagine that as soon as Jesus says, you are the, somebody chimes in with something.

We're the dangerous disciples. We're the unstoppable apostles. We're the mighty men of the Messiah. And Jesus is like, no, actually, you're salt.

[10:03] That's what, you're salt. I mean, it's not the most motivating metaphor, is it? Woohoo! We're salt. Salt. Like, what in the world does Jesus mean here when he says, you are the salt of the earth?

And when you deal with metaphors, this is not salt in the ancient Near East, okay? I couldn't get that on Amazon, all right? But when somebody uses a metaphor in the Bible, we almost always start thinking about explanations in our modern day, right?

You'll be in that Bible study, and they'll be like, what does salt mean to you? And you just go around, and you get 12 different meanings of salt. Stop it, all right?

It doesn't matter what the verse means to you. It matters what the verse means. That's a good place for amen. I got a few, all right? Doesn't matter what salt means to you.

It's what did salt mean according to Jesus. And I have, as a pastor, heard so many explanations that don't fit the original audience. Well, you know, salt makes you thirsty, and we're supposed to make people thirsty for Jesus, right?

[11:10] It's like, well, that's not at all what it means in the ancient Near East. Or somebody will say, well, salt makes things taste better, and Christians exist to make the world better.

That's true, but not really what salt means in the ancient Near East. Here's the most common one. I guarantee you, if you read a commentary on this passage, this is the one you're most likely going to hear.

Or if you've ever heard a sermon on this passage, this is the predominant one you've heard, which is, salt is a preservative. Isn't that what you usually hear?

And for good reason. There probably is some merit here, because salt in the ancient Near East was used to keep things fresh. You didn't have refrigeration in the ancient Near East, in the ancient times.

And so, salt would be used to keep things fresh. Of course, the idea then, if this is what it means that you are salt, is that the world is decaying. There's sinful decay everywhere.

[12:12] Relationships fall apart. Society falls apart. There's evil everywhere. And God has put you, Christian, in the world to make it a better place.

Isn't that usually how you hear it taught? And that may very well be true. Alistair McGrath writes this. This is a good example of this. He says, The sad truth is much of the modern evangelicalism has become locked and restricted into the stale backwaters of a Christian subculture.

Amen. Contact with the secular world is often frowned upon. The love of God initially calls us out of the world, and then it propels us back into it. The world at its worst needs Christians at their best.

Amen. We agree with that. And so, it may very well be that this is what Jesus means by salt, but I don't think it is. It may.

There is historical merit for why it may be a preservative, but I actually think Jesus is referring to a covenant. And some of you are like, I've never heard that.

[13:16] Well, then I should probably prove that. Who is recording this? Answer, Matthew. It is the most Jewish gospel of all the four gospels.

And he is writing specifically to a Jewish audience. And so, the question again is not, what do you think salt means? It's, what would salt have most likely meant to the original audience?

If you're with me, say yes. And I think Jesus' Jewish audience, to whom Matthew is recording, would have immediately thought of passages like this.

Leviticus 2, 13. You shall season all your grain offerings with what? You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offerings.

With all your offerings you shall offer. Or maybe passages like 2 Chronicles 13, verse 5. Ought you not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?

[14:27] In other words, faith family, in the ancient world, salt was used in an agreement that was legally binding. If two parties, this seems strange to us, but it wouldn't have been strange to them at all.

If two parties were making an agreement, they would often eat salt together in the presence of witnesses. And that act of having salt in that meal became a binding contract of their covenant together.

We don't do that now, but that's what they did then. In other words, here's what I think Jesus is saying. And by the way, it's why salt was used in the Old Testament sacrifices. For instance, that Leviticus passage that I just read.

You had to have salt on the offering. Why? Because this act of a sacrifice was a part of the covenant with your God. What's the point? Jesus is saying, you are agents of a new covenant. Yes, you in a sense preserve things. I'm not denying that interpretation. But I think Jesus is saying here, you exist to show the world a new way of approaching God.

[15:37] That's why I called you disciples. I have come. The kingdom has come to bring in a new covenant. A new day. A new way of being in relationship with God.

And you exist to show the world that. It's not just to keep it from decaying. It is to reveal what it is like to now come before God through me, Jesus is saying.

Which I think that makes more sense when you unpack the second metaphor, which is light. Look at verse 14. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Nor do the people light a lamp and put a basket but on a stand. And it gives light to all 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.

So, light. Not just salt, but light. This is the second metaphor. And we don't even have to sit around and ask, what does Jesus mean by light? Do you know why? All you have to do is go back a few verses.

[16:47] Look at Matthew chapter 4 where light has already been addressed in Matthew's gospel. And it will show us, pun intended, what light means. Look at Matthew 4 verse 16.

The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great what? Light. And for those dwelling in the region in shadow of death, on them a, talk to me, light has dawned.

Now watch, verse 17. From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Light is very easy to understand now in light of Matthew chapter 4.

Namely, Jesus has started his ministry. And what is he revealing? He is revealing God to the world. God has come in flesh in the person of Jesus Christ.

And those who live in darkness now have had a light come upon them. Light has dawned.

Therefore, disciples, to be light is to make Christ known in the world.

[17:56] In the ancient Near East, you didn't have electricity. I went to seminary to learn that. They put a lamp in the middle of the house to light the entire house.

Why? Because that's the only light they had to see in the darkness. What Jesus is saying is that, and isn't this true, the world is in darkness. They can't find their way to God.

Paul says that the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel. So what does the world need? They need light.

They need someone to show them God. Amen? Amen? So I think salt and light go perfectly together.

When you understand salt as covenant and light as revealing who Jesus is. Jesus is telling his disciples, you exist. You are salt and light.

[18:58] You have been called to show the world who God truly is. And you might say, but pastor, you don't understand.

I mean, if you knew who you were preaching this to, I'm nobody. I can't make much of a difference.

You know, I drive a truck. I'm a stay-at-home mom. I work in a cubicle all by myself every day.

Like, you really think that this applies to me? Absolutely it applies to you. Are you a follower of Jesus? Because if you are, the question is not, are you light?

It's, are you good light or bad light? It's not, are you salt? It's, are you good salt or bad salt?

Because if you have said yes to Jesus, you are salt and light.

I remember one time I was leading a mission team to Juarez, Mexico. This has been back many, many years ago. And we crossed the U.S. border. We had a day before we were going to fly back home.

[19:55] And so we drove up into New Mexico and we visited Carlsbad Caverns. Not taverns. That was an entirely different trip. All right, Carlsbad Caverns. And one of our team members that was

with us on the team was claustrophobic.

Her name was Michelle. And she didn't want to go down on the tour. And I told her, I said, Michelle, you can trust me. I'm a pastor. She's like, okay, all right. I'll do this. Even though I am terrified at going down.

And of course you start off and it's a big wide open area and everything's fine. But by the end of the whole tour, you're like a thousand feet below. And they turn the lights off. How many of you have ever done that tour?

They turn the lights off and it's like, you can't see anything at all. It is total and complete darkness. And that's when a bat bit me.

And then the bat spoke. And it sounded an awful lot like Michelle saying, pastor, I will never trust you again. This is precisely why I did not want to come down here.

[ 21 : 01 ] Fearing for my life that Michelle was literally going to kill me in that moment. I just, and we didn't have like an Apple watch back then. This was several years ago. I remember just reaching down to my watch and just hitting that button.

And just a little bit of light came on in that total, complete darkness. And listen, that was all Michelle needed to get out of that cave.

Some of you sat here tonight and you watch online and you think, my life, really? I'm just a this, I'm just a that. And I'm here to tell you, it only takes a little bit of light in a very dark world to impact someone else for the sake of Jesus.

Amen? Don't ever underestimate the difference you're making as you simply approach every day being the salt and light that Jesus has called you to be.

Are you with me? So Jesus here in these two metaphors is saying to his disciples that we exist to declare and reveal the new covenant, a new life that is found in God.

[ 22 : 16 ] Which is why Jesus then says this. Now look at verse 13. The second part, he says, 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. Now look at verse 15. Same thing about light. He says, Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a stand, and it gives light to all the house.

So here's what Jesus is saying. If salt, this is where it's going to get a little real. So, if salt is not being used for the purposes of salt, then what good is the salt?

Hello? Salt doesn't do any good if it stays in the cabinet. If it's hiding away, if it's shrinking away, if it's staying in the cabinet, it isn't fulfilling the purpose of the salt.

Likewise, if the entire reason you lit the lamp was to light the house, why in the world would you hide the lamp? Are you tracking with Jesus' honestly sarcasm here?

[ 23 : 28 ] You lit the lamp to light the house, why did you hide the lamp? It doesn't make any sense at all because the whole purpose of lighting the lamp was to light the house.

The whole reason you are salt and light, the whole reason I put you here was to do what salt and light is meant to do. It's to show the world that you can be in relationship with God, to show the world who God is.

Otherwise, salt and light is good for nothing. Now, that's not to say that you're a worthless, useless person. It's simply to say that if you're not, listen Christian, everybody right here watching online, if you're not doing what you were saved to do, then what's going on with you?

Why aren't you doing what Jesus has called you to do? You're like a screen door on a submarine. You don't really have a purpose. Some of you are going to think about that later and like, Oh, I get that.

Huh. Right? It's you've been given a purpose. Fulfill that purpose. Do you remember Jesus's rebuke of the church of Laodicea in the book of Revelation? They were lukewarm.

[ 24 : 40 ] And that lukewarm means hot water is used for something. Cold water is useful for something. But stale, stagnant water is useful for nothing.

And so is a Christian that doesn't take the mission God has given you seriously. And I know that those are hard, stinging words, but it's what Jesus is teaching here.

And so I've got two questions that I want to ask. First is, how does salt lose its saltiness? And how does light lose its brightness? Okay, we are salt and light.

And we want to be the salt and light that he's called us to be. And so how would it happen that we lose our saltiness or our light is out?

So number one is this. Salt is no longer salt when it becomes diluted. Okay. In other words, the most common way in the ancient Near East for salt to lose its saltiness was for it to get mixed. [ 25 : 34 ] In the ancient Near East, it would be with sand. Okay. So if you're tracking with this illustration, right, you are salt. And of course, in the ancient Near East, you've got a very, you know, sandy, dry climate.

And so usually what would happen, I mean, it's not like salt ever becomes not salt. Okay. It loses its saltiness in the fact that it becomes mixed with something.

And again, in the ancient Near East, that's usually more often than not sand. Okay. So everybody kind of see all the salt and sand mixed together. Now volunteer, I want somebody to come up here, take this and separate the salt from the sand.

All right. Who wants to do that? No. You're like, you can't do that. There's no way. The salt is now worthless. Because the salt is now mixed with the sand, you can't do anything with the salt.

So what you would normally do, practically speaking, is what? I won't throw it out. Because it's become mixed. Yeah, it may still be salt, but the fact that it's mixed with something means it no longer can be used for the purposes of salt.

[ 26 : 45 ] Are you getting the implication here? When you become like the world, when you dissolve into the world, when you take on the values of the world, when you become just like the world, the salt is no longer doing the purposes of salt.

And some of you have heard me give this illustration because I love giving it about Lou Bolin. He's a Chinese artist. And he's known for immersing himself in all types of different backgrounds.

Here's him at the grocery store. You see him. You can kind of see his head there, right? Here's him at the theater. Some of these are some of his new works that he's done. Here's him out on the street in China.

You can see him kind of right there in the middle. In other words, he's made a name for himself by blending in. Oh, that that would not be true for the people of God.

That we would not make a name for ourselves of blending in. Because when salt becomes diluted, it's no longer salt. And then the second thing is light.

[ 27 : 48 ] How it loses its brightness is it becomes dimmed. Salt loses saltiness by being diluted. Light becomes ineffective by being hidden. The way you would dim the light is that you would hide it with something, right?

You would cover it with something. And I wonder, I'm not going to keep this on so I don't set a blaze here on the stage, but the light becomes hidden. It's hiding behind something.

Like I'm fearful that if I really take my faith seriously, what they might do to me, and so I'm just going to hide behind something. Jesus is saying, no, salt isn't to be diluted and light isn't to be dimmed.

Now here's my second question I want to ask, okay? And that's this. Why would we as salt be diluted or dimmed? So like what would create these two realities?

Why would we mix with the world or why would we hide and retreat? One word. Anybody want to take a guess what it is? Fear.

[ 28 : 56 ] Close. Persecution. Persecution. Now we've taken a few weeks off, which is why maybe you don't feel the flow at this point.

But what did Jesus just talk about in the flow of Matthew 5? Look back at verse 10. Blessed are 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 on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

In other words, here's how the flow of the sermon is going. Those that are pure in heart, loyal to God, will do the work of peacemaking. Do you remember what peacemaking is? It's the work of evangelism, seeking to bring peace between God and man as you share the gospel, the ministry of reconciliation.

And those that get involved in peacemaking will take it on the chin for Jesus. It's not a matter of if. It's a matter of when.

[ 30 : 03 ] It's a matter of degree. Well, what's the temptation when conflict arises? As you do the work of evangelism. As you are salt and light. When the bully on the school bus tries to take your lunch money.

Answer, you put the salt back in the drawer and you put the light under a basket. The temptation when persecution comes is to shrink, not shine.

Are you with me? Do you see why Jesus is teaching these verses? Here's his point. Notice it on the screen. When persecution comes, disciples, and it's going to.

It's not if. It's when. You are not to shrink. You are to shine. You are to remember why you were put here on earth.

The mission I have called you to, which is to be my disciples to show the world who God is and how to be in relationship with him. Are you with me tonight, faith family? I mean, otherwise, what are you doing?

[ 31 : 07 ] Well, I'm building up my retirement. That's not why I put you here. I mean, build up your retirement. That's fine. Enjoy the things of life.

That's good. But are you taking seriously the mission of being my disciple? Of taking up a cross daily and following me in a world that doesn't want to hear it.

And they will persecute you for it. But do you know what you do in that moment? You don't shrink. You don't run away.

You stand up. Not in any type of act of violence, but as a witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Disciples don't shrink. They shine. And notice how Jesus takes that now in verse 16 as we're almost finished. I have to mean that in this service because there's another service coming.

[ 32 : 10 ] All right. Verse 16, Jesus says, 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.

Last point here is the ministry of salt and light. Good works are not what makes us light. Good works are what happen because we are light. Amen?

Let me say that again. Good works are not what you do to become light. Good works are what you do because you are light. Good works don't save you.

Good works are what come out of your salvation. Good lights shine. And now Jesus is going to give a warning to this in the next chapter.

Let me point this out to you and then we'll close. Look at chapter 6 in verse 1. We'll get there in about a year. Chapter 6 verse 1. Beware of practicing your righteousness before people in order to be seen by them.

[ 33 : 11 ] For then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. So if you read that verse and you read chapter 5 verse 16, you might say, okay, okay, okay. Jesus, what is it? Do you do works in front of others?

Or do you not do works in front of others? Everybody tracking with the seeming contradiction? On one verse, you say, do your works in front of others. And then in chapter 6 verse 1, you're like, be careful not to do your works in front of others.

I don't get it. What's the answer? The answer is yes. You're like, that didn't help. Jesus is talking about two different things here.

And the two different things in chapter 6 verse 1 and chapter 5 verse 16 are all brought down to motivation. And this is big. Notice it on the screen. One does good works to be seen.

The other does good deeds so Christ will shine. And that's the difference. When we are doing our good works out in the world, our motivation for doing them is not so that we will glorify self.

[ 34 : 19 ] It's so that we will glorify the Savior. And any motivation other than that, Jesus warned you against. Because salt and light, as you're calling, is not to let the world know about you.

It's to let the world know about Jesus. And this means that we will do good works by God's grace with the proper motivation so that people will see Christ in us, not us.

And of course, this fits the metaphor with salt and light. I'm almost done. Hang with me. In other words, the purpose of salt is not to bring focus to the salt. You don't eat meat with salt and say, that salt is amazing.

Waiter! Waiter! Could I have some more salt? No! No! Nobody glorifies the salt. You're like, this thing that I'm eating, it's amazing.

Because of the salt, the salt doesn't bring glory to itself. As we live as salt, we draw attention to God. In the same way, you shine a light on something, you don't say, look at that light.

[ 35 : 32 ] Okay? You say, where I'm from, hurry up and shoot the deer. No, that's not what you say, all right? Some of you will get that later too, right? No, you shine the light on an object and you say, look at how awesome the object is.

The light is simply shining on the object. What we want in our lives is for people to say, wow, God is good. God is good.

Not that Wes is good or you are good or faith family is good, but God is good. That's who God is. One example, and I'm done.

1 Peter 2, verse 13, Peter speaks of this. He says, be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution. Did you really have to use this example, pastor?

Whether it be the emperor as supreme or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. Why? Because this is the will of God.

[ 36 : 34 ] That by doing good, you put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. You shine. But politics is corrupt.

I went to seminary to figure that out too, all right? Politics is corrupt. I don't want to submit to any authority. But you're not submitting for you. You're submitting to shine.

You're in submission unless, of course, they're asking you to sin and then you don't bow. But in little ways like this, all throughout your day, you're in submission so that Jesus will shine.

And they'll look at you and say, that's what God is like. Tell me more. The summary of this passage, faith family, is that persecution is not an if, it's a when.

It's going to happen. And when that persecution comes, you're going to be tempted to shrink. But God has put you in the world to shine.

[ 37 : 45 ] I close with this example. I remember this from many, many years ago. A pastor talked about how a lady came to visit him in his office and she was struggling with her work environment.

And she just said, Pastor, I hate where I work. I'm a Christian. I work with non-Christians. And it's just a, it's a tough environment. It's very, very difficult for me to live out my faith where I work.

And the pastor just looked at her and he said, where do you put lights? And she dismissed that. She's like, you're not even listening, all right? I'm telling you, the people that I work around, they mock me.

They make fun of my faith. It is like every day the last thing I want to do is go to work. Can you help me? And he just said, where do you put lights? She's like, I wish you'd stop asking that question and just give me some real advice.

I hate where I work. Do you think that God could be calling me somewhere else? Like this is such a bad environment for me because I'm a Christian. And he said, where do you put lights?

[ 38 : 50 ] And then it finally clicked that you put lights in dark places. And she realized in that moment that that is precisely why God had called her to work there.

Because in the darkness of that work environment, she was to be salt and light for Jesus Christ.

After all, we are a people who know that from the darkest days can come the brightest of lights.

For the Bible says that Jesus was on the cross and as he was, darkness came over the land. And three days later, darkness was overcome by resurrection light.

And as a result, amen, faith family. As a result, listen, as a result, we have nothing to fear. We have nothing to fear. And we have no reason to shrink.

And every reason to shine. And all God's people said, amen. Let's pray together. God, thank you for the word that we've been able just to look at tonight.

[ 40 : 05 ] To think about, to reflect on in our life. We are salt and light in the world. We have experienced your new covenant, your saving grace.

We know who Jesus is because you have revealed him to us. And so you have put us in the world. Yes, to enjoy families.

And yes, to work. And yes, to enjoy the things of this world. All of those things are fine. But there is a purpose and a mission far greater, which is in those families.

And in those workplaces. And in those opportunities of our life. That we shine the light of Jesus Christ. So God, help us tonight, by your grace, be the salt and light that you have called us to be.

Right here, where you've called us in this community. And we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.