

Matthew

Sermon on the Mount

April 21, 2024

I. Introduction

A. Today, we are moving on from the Beatitudes, but we are not leaving them behind. Rather, we are taking the principles contained in them with us – because

1. They help form the foundation and the direction for the rest of the Sermon on the Mount.
2. They show us the path to a righteousness that **both** surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, **and** brings us into a blessed, happy life.
3. And they set the standard for a godly Christian life – thus showing us where we are headed and that we need God’s help to get there.

B. **Matthew 5:13-16**, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. [14] You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; [15] nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. [16] Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

C. Pray

II. You are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world

A. [13] You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

1. **You are the salt of the earth** – not you ought to be, but **you are**.
 - a. As you know, salt can be used as a preservative – which is why some Christians take this verse to mean we are to be a preservative force in our world. Yet **John 12:31** indicates that the ruler of this world is Satan. And **1 John 5:19** tells us that the whole world lies in his power.
 - (1) Which raises the question: “What are we preserving?” The world is full of evil, like fast-growing cancer taking over a human body.
 - (2) God’s solution in Noah’s day was to destroy the evil with a flood, and His final solution is to destroy the evil by casting it into the Lake of Fire.

- b. However, salt is also a flavoring agent, and we can flavor our relationships and circumstances with good. This will not remove the evil, but it will place moments and pockets of good in the midst of the evil, helping those in need and inviting unbelievers to repentance and faith in God.
 - c. Admittedly, many may not notice, and some will resist or even reject our influence for good, but that does not change the fact that our influence has been sprinkled on those people and situations.
2. Therefore, what **vs 13** is telling us is: as individual Christians, and as part of the universal Body of Christ – we are the only salt available to flavor our world with such things as faith in God, godly love, righteousness, humility, meekness, compassion, and mercy.
- a. However, unlike a saltshaker which has to be picked up and shaken by the one wanting salt, we must do the shaking, that is, we must shake our salt on the people and situations around us. This requires deliberate action on our part. But it also requires looking for places, opportunities, and ways to flavor the relationships and situations around us.
 - b. If we do not flavor the world around us with the salt of godliness, then the flavor of godliness that we could and should have put into the world will not be present in the world – and the world will be the worse for it.
3. **But if the salt has become tasteless**, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.
- a. The reality is, a grain of salt cannot lose its saltiness, **but if it could**, there is no way to make it salty again. It is useless.
 - b. In other words, since each individual Christian and the Body of Christ universal is the only salt available to flavor the world, our failure to infuse goodness and godliness into the world makes our flavoring presence in the world useless.
 - c. We may accomplish great things for the world, or for our employer, for our family, or even for ourselves – as the world counts greatness – but as God counts greatness, we will be like the servant who, out of fear, hid the money he was entrusted with in the ground, and hence, produced no profit for his master.
4. You may be wondering how being salt could work in a world overrun with all forms of evil, where pride is held in high regard, where the predominant values are focused on the good of self, where a growing

number of people either despise Christians or ignore them altogether, and where very few show even the slightest interest in listening.

5. **Consider:**

- a. Where there is fear, discouragement, despair, and depression, we can flavor those situations with a peacefulness and confident hope that comes from trusting God to work all things out for good.
 - b. Where there is injustice, ill-will, discrimination, hatred, and hostility, we can flavor those situations by speaking up for justice and by showing love, acceptance, and support for those being mistreated.
 - c. Where there is unhappiness, discontent, complaint, and self-pity, we can flavor those situations by expressing gratitude for what we have, contentment with what is, and joy that God is still good and worthy of our confident trust.
 - d. Where people are projecting doom, expecting the worst, and feeling hopeless about the future – be the future a long way off or tomorrow – we can flavor such situations by sharing how God has protected and provided for us even when it seemed all was lost and there was no hope of relief or rescue in sight.
 - e. Where there is a lack of common sense, the absence of wisdom, outright foolishness, or denial of truth, we can flavor those situations by being a voice of reason, wisdom, caution, and truth – which includes both Biblical truth and rational truth.
6. Once again, if you are a Christian, a born-again believer, a child of God, then **you are** the salt of the earth – not you ought to be, but **you are**. May we, individually and as a group of believers do what salt does. May we be the kind of influence that flavors whatever or whomever we come in contact with – be it in our home, our workplace, our neighborhood, our church, or our world.

B. [14] You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; [15] nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

1. Here again, Jesus says “**You are** the light of the world – not you ought to be, but **you are**. And because this is what we are, Jesus presents two pictures that teach us about being God’s light in the world.
2. **First**, a city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Why? Because it is not a single window or street light, it is many lights gathered together, and in the darkness it can be seen from far away – especially since it is up on a hill.

- a. Now I want to be clear – the light that Jesus is talking about is not the light of theology or the light of an emotionally exciting or entertaining church service. It is not the light of social services for the needy – though it certainly can include these kinds of activities.
 - b. This is the combined light of godly people living according to God’s word, and acting in good and godly ways for the benefit of those affected by their choices and behavior.
 - c. Therefore, we are like a city on a hill in the darkness of night when as a group we shine forth such godly things as love, righteousness, compassion, kindness, mercy, and the truth of God’s word.
 - (1) True, not everyone who sees our light will come to the light. But everyone who sees our light will have seen the light of God and God’s love, and the light of godly Christians living godly lives.
 - (2) Therefore, as God’s people who gather in one place, may we present a godly, biblically sound light that makes God look good and the Christian life worthy of joining.
3. **Second**, no one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.
- a. In other words, God has not saved us and given us the Holy Spirit, the holy scriptures, godly teachers, preachers, and prophets to teach us and conform us to the likeness of Jesus Christ just to hide our godly character and loving behavior from those around us.
 - b. It is God’s intention that we, as individuals, will be His lights wherever we are – bringing the light of His truth and His ways into the darkness.
 - c. However, to assure we understand our role as lights, Jesus tells us what kind of light we are to be in **vs. 16**. And when we get to **vs 16**, we will see why godly character, godly values, godly attitudes, godly words, and godly deeds truly matter when it comes to being God’s light in the world.
- C. But before we get to that, let me ask, “Why lights?” Why has God made us His lights? I believe He has made us lights because there is no amount of darkness that can hide light when it is brought into the darkness. Even the smallest flicker or ray of light can be seen through the darkness from some distance away.
1. This is not something new for NT Christians, it was God’s intention for Israel to be His light in the world. We read this in **Isaiah 49:6**,

- “It is too small a thing** that You (*Israel*) should be My (*God’s*) Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; **I will also** make you a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”
2. And speaking through Paul, God says in **Ephesians 5:7-10**, “Therefore do not be partakers with them (*the godless people in our world*); [8] for you were formerly darkness (*you used to be a godless person*), **but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light** [9] (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), [10] [walk as children who are] trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.”
 3. This brings us to Jesus’ description of the kind of light we are to be.
- D. [16] Let your light shine before men **in such a way** that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.
1. The standard set by Jesus for the kind of light we are to be is the kind that **makes God**, His goodness, His love, His righteousness, His kindness, His faithfulness, His patience, and His mercy **look so good** that those who see it will **have reason** to acknowledge God’s goodness, greatness, and worthiness to be trusted, adored, and obeyed.
 - a. Though theology, doctrinal statements, style of worship, and church programs are important, they are of little consequence when it comes to making God look good.
 - b. What matters most is Christians, individually and as a group consistently displaying godly character, values, attitudes, words, and deeds, day by day, wherever we are.
 - c. Obviously, older, more mature Christians will provide a brighter, clearer light than new or immature Christians. Yet each of us is a light wherever we are along the path of spiritual growth.
 2. Therefore, if we are to be the kind of light that gives the people around us a reason to see God as good and glorify Him, we must be intentional, prayerful, and thoughtful about living a godly life in our homes, our workplace, our neighborhoods, when shopping, eating in restaurants, visiting in other people’s homes, or any other places we may be.
 3. In other words, we must live – day in and day out – in such a way as to give those who observe us, reasons to acknowledge God’s goodness and worthiness to be trusted, adored, and obeyed.

III. Conclusion

A. Peter said this way in **1 Peter 2:9-12**, “**You are** a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession (*not just because you are saved, but because as one who is saved, you live a godly life*), **so that you may proclaim** the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; [10] for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. [11] Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers (*who are passing through this world*) to **abstain from fleshly lusts** which wage war against the soul. [12] **Keep your behavior excellent** among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.”