

The Gospel of Matthew

Title: Salt and Light

Text: Matthew 5:13-20

Introduction: Matthew Henry "Christ had lately called his disciples, and told them that they should be fishers of men; here he tells them further what he designed them to be—the salt of the earth, and lights of the world, that they might be indeed what it was expected they should be." Let's remember the crowd whom Jesus is speaking to. There are religious zealots, those who want an immediate overthrow of the Roman government, many who want to establish a theocracy. So, what Jesus is speaking to them about isn't particularly what they want to hear.

Proposition statement: We will see the affirmation of the law pointing us to Christ and how that's reflected in our life.

POINT 1 - YOU ARE SALT AND LIGHT (VS. 13-16)

Salt is a penetrating, so is the Word of God, Hebrews 4:12 "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge (discerner) the thoughts and intentions of the heart." The analogy of salt is in reference to the gospel, it penetrates, Acts 2:37 "Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brethren, what shall we do?'"

Salt is very small yet very useful and necessary. The implication of Jesus is the disciples, true followers of Christ are the salt of the earth. Not themselves, but the message they proclaim. If you, who should season others, are yourselves unsavory, void of spiritual life, relish, and vigor; if a Christian be so, especially if a minister be so, his condition is very sad. The rhetorical question is if the salt has lost it's flavor how then can it be seasoned? The short answer is it can't. **NOTE:** A better wording would be in this verse is "how can it be salty again?" What's the only solution now? To be thrown out. To be discarded. Jesus is not speaking of losing salvation here. But Christians can lose their effectiveness when sin and the world contaminate their lives.

Christians are to be the light of the world. Ephesians 5:8 "for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light." Philippians 2:15 "so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world." The greatest and only true light is Jesus, John 8:12 "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." Therefore, believers are workers together with Christ, to share the glorious light of the gospel.

This is a paradox, a city on a hill CANNOT be hidden. And why would you light a lamp and put it under a basket. The context is of course, no electricity, and a candle or lamp would be the light of

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the room. So the rhetorical question is asked why light a candle and hide it under a basket? The illustrations Jesus is giving is obvious to those in the original audience. In other words, they understood the things He was saying about salt and light. No one would use salt that's lost its flavor, and no one would light a lamp and hide it. **Note:** a hidden light is still light, but it's useless.

John is described as a light for the gospel, John 5:33-35 "You have sent to John, and he has testified to the truth. But the testimony which I receive is not from man, but I say these things so that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light."

Application: Let your light so shine before men. Why? That they may see your good works. The intent is to bring glory too God in what we do and say. In order they might glorify God. As Christians today you are salt and light to a world that will see. What we do causes people to be attracted to God not us.

POINT 2 - AN AFFIRMATION OF OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES (VS. 17-19)

Jesus is not making up a new law with salt and light, He is affirming what the OT teaches. He in all respects yielded obedience to the law, honored his parents, sanctified the sabbath, prayed, gave alms, and did that which never any one else did, obeyed perfectly, and never broke the law in any thing. Jesus affirms the law. He is assuring His disciples that His coming, and soon death and resurrection does not do away with the law but fulfills it. Of course we don't do sacrifices anymore, but you still obey the OT don't you?

There are three basic points in these passages Jesus is making. First is the preeminence of Scripture (vs. 17). Matthew 15:3 "Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition." He fulfilled the moral, judicial and ceremonial law. Second is the permanence of Scripture (vs. 18). Not the smallest stroke or letter will be done away with. Jesus made many references to OT. God's word is authoritative down to the smallest letter and stroke of the law. Thirdly there is the pertinence of Scripture (vs. 19). Lately the "do your own thing" has become standard in culture and even churches. In Judges 21:25 "Everyman did what was right in his own eyes."

POINT 3 - THE PURPOSE OF SCRIPTURE (VS. 20)

Galatians 3:24 "Therefore the Law has become our tutor (schoolmaster) to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith." John MacArthur "The law was the perfect standard which would show us our sin. That was its purpose. The law was to show us that we couldn't do it on our own, that even the best - the scribes and the Pharisees, with all of their religiosity, with all of their trappings, with all of their ceremony and all of their ritual could not gain the righteousness required to enter the kingdom." Simply put, the law was given to us to frustrate us to show us our

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inadequacy. The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees was external, partial, redefined and self centered.

External - They concerned themselves entirely with the external observance of the law and tradition. In Matthew 23 our Lord gives a graphic picture of the external observances and their ultimate failure. In some of the most harsh truth Jesus' uses is in Matthew 23:27 "For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones...".

Partial - Matthew 23:23 says they tithed "for you tithe mint, dill and cumin, and have neglected the weighted matters of the law, justice, mercy and faithfulness." They were meticulous at tithing the smallest plants and seeds from their garden, which wasn't specifically commanded in the law, but had total disregard for showing justice and mercy.

Redefined - as today many liberal, culturally relevant Christians are redefining biblical terms such as righteousness, holiness, sufficiency, and authority. Many have taken biblical terms and made them fit human wisdom and philosophy.

CONCLUSION

The righteous God requires is far superior than man and his efforts. 1 Samuel 16:7 "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." In Matthew 19:23-25 Jesus was telling His disciples how hard it was for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, how narrow it was, and they responded "Then who can be saved?" And looking at them Jesus said to them, "With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." In other words, your righteousness won't get you into glory, but God's imputed righteousness through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, His atoning sacrifice takes your filth and makes it pure.

APPLICATION

- Is your life being contaminated by influences?
- Do you believe in the absolute truth and authority of Scripture?
- Are you counting on your efforts, personal observance of laws or goodness in yourself to be counted worthy?