

You are salt. You are light. That's what Jesus said. Tonight we're going to explore what he meant by those metaphors and what they mean as regards our walk with him and with one another.

PRAYER

READ Matthew 5:13-16, "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. ¹⁴"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In 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."

Jesus' language is poetic. He used metaphors and parallelism. "You are the salt... You are the light", and "of the earth..." and "of the world" are the parallels. And "salt" and "light" are the metaphors. He spoke like this to make his words memorable. They're visual and they're packed with meaning.

Concerning our identity as salt, again, Jesus said, **Matthew 5:13, "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."**

First, this passage and that concerning light follow the Beatitudes. So it is only logically that Jesus was talking about living the Beatitudes. In other words we are "salt" and we are "light" when our lives reflect the Beatitudes, such as "Blessed are the poor in spirit.... Blessed are those who mourn.... Blessed are the meek..., " and so forth.

Secondly, the use of the words "earth" and "world" are in reference to the people who live all around us. In other words, we are not literally salt for the dirt and sea and light for the grass and trees. But Jesus was talking about how we live the Beatitudes among the people with whom we live on the earth, in the world.

Thirdly, being salt and light is not about salvation. How we live is the fruit of our salvation not the cause of our salvation. So when Jesus said when salt has lost its “saltiness” it is “thrown out,” he wasn’t talking about being condemned to hell. Rather, he was talking about being of no use to other people as his representative.

Think about like this. We were put on this planet to give non-Christians a foretaste of the life to come through our own lives. What does that look like? We give them hope. They see our lives and realize we are not easily rattled by the ups and downs. We show them love. When they are mean to us, when they don’t show us respect, we love them anyway. We provide encouragement. Even when it appears that all is lost, we know that God is still with us, and we know that he will provide everything we need unto eternity, even when we don’t know how he’ll do it. And we show them that we have peace of mind even when things are not going so well for us.

On the other hand, a Christian can lose his saltiness. I knew a pastor who was single. He was counseling a single woman. The short version of the story is that he got her pregnant. After the baby was born, the pastor talked to the district president. He repented and asked for forgiveness, which the president granted him. But the president also asked the pastor for his resignation from the church as its pastor. In a word, the pastor had lost his “saltiness,” he had lost his effectiveness as a pastor. He was forgiven; he was still a child of God, but he was no longer fit to be a pastor.

I think that is what Jesus meant. If you want to check yourself as regards your “saltiness,” become familiar with the Beatitudes and pray about them, about how your character can be filled up with salt, for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel to this mean-spirited, crass, angry world in which we live.

As regards our identity as “light,” again, Jesus said, **Matthew 5:14-16, “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶In 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.”**

The Bible is bookended with light. In the first couple of verses of Genesis we read, **“God said, ‘Let there be light.’ And it was so” (Gen 1:3)**. And in the last book of the Bible, The Revelation, the light of God obliterates all traces of darkness. We read, **“And night shall be no more; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light.” (Rev 22:5)**

Nearly 200 times “light” is in the Bible to teach us about God and about our life in him. And it is used to illustrate the drama and wonder of Christian conversion. For example, St. Paul writes, **2 Corinthians 4:6, “For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”**

When Jesus said, “You are the light of the world,” he was alluding to how we’ve been bathed in the light of Christ. In this light, our sins were revealed. In this light, our sins were absolved. And in this light, our lives brought forth fruit.

If Jesus was giving a children’s sermon, he would’ve said something like, What’s this? (A candle) What’s this? (A basket.) Now what happens if I put the basket over the top of the candle? (“It’ll catch on fire!”) Very good, Johnny. What else will happen? (“It’ll be dark!”) Very good, Suzi! So we want to put our candle on a stand so **“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.” (Matthew 5:16)**

I think the Lord is saying, go public, let your faith be real for others as you live the Beatitudes.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we’ve received salt and light from Jesus. He’s been working in our hearts from the day we were baptized with water. He makes us salty and light-giving as he fills up our hearts with his Word through the reading and studying of the Bible, the Lord’s Supper, worship, and Christian fellowship.

This week my friends as we continue our march to the Cross, let us meditate on the Beatitudes and pray that the Lord would fill our lives with his salt and light that we might ever be effective witnesses to the world of his love and grace.

Let us consider what things we might stop doing and what things we might start doing that we might not lose our saltiness or put a basket over our heads!

And may you have the opportunity to be salt and light for another person this week, someone who really needs to see the Gospel in flesh and blood, in the name of Jesus. Amen.