

Last Sunday we had the joy of walking through Jesus' teaching on the Beatitudes. This week let us together discover some amazing truths to help us walk with God.

**Salt of the Earth.** Why did Jesus say we are the Salt of the Earth? Salt is a unique chemical compound. There's nothing else like it. Jesus was saying we ought to be a different kind of people. The question is what makes us different from the rest of the world? We must go back to the original language in which the New Testament was written to find the answer.

The Greek word for salt is '*halas*' which means prudent. **Prudence** manifests itself in many different ways. However, Colossians 4: 6 says, "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt so that you may know how you should answer everyone." Here, for salt Paul is using the same Greek word as Matthew. Then prudence is the defining characteristic of a disciple, and it manifests through our words.

Now, Salt cannot lose its flavor because it's a stable compound. If so, why did Jesus say, "But if the salt loses its flavor, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled on by people" (Mat. 5:13). In the ancient days unlike now salt was not harvested through means of vaporization. The salt harvested using such methods was unclean sometimes and often ended up being thrown into the street and trodden under the feet walking by.

Jesus is saying we can choose to be prudent or imprudent. Just like salt without savor is useless so is the imprudent Christian because there's no substitute for a prudent Christian.

How do we choose to be prudent? The Bible says, "For the mouth speaks from what fills the heart" (Mat. 12:34<sup>b</sup>). It also warns us to guard the heart above everything else. "Guard your heart with all vigilance, for from it are the sources of life" (Prov. 4:23). If you want to be a prudent Christian, you must start by changing your heart.

Now let us move to the metaphor of the **“Light of the World.”** The Gospel of John says, “Jesus is the true light” (John 1:9). Then why did Jesus call us the light of the world? It's obvious we are not the light ourselves. I can think of at least three reasons.

First, Jesus was basically saying our lifestyle should be a manifestation of his light. The Greek word “phos” used by Matthew in place of light here gives the meaning **“manifest.”** The amplified Version makes this a lot clearer. It says, “You are the light of Christ to the world.” Jesus is not saying we are the light ourselves but witnesses of his light.

Second, I told you we can choose to be prudent or imprudent. Jesus is giving us another choice here. We can choose to be the witnesses of light or inhabitants of darkness. It's important that we understand darkness is not the opposite of light as many seem to believe. Likewise light becomes absent when our lifestyle contradicts God's expressed will, allowing darkness to take over (Jn 12:35).

Third, Jesus is calling us to be different a second time. (The first time was when he said we are the salt of the earth.) He is implying that the difference between a disciple and a non-believer should be no lesser than the sharp contrast that exists between dark and light. In fact, when non-believers see us, they should be convinced of the darkness engulfing their own lives.

What must we do to become witnesses of light? In his 1<sup>st</sup> letter, John says, “In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind” (1 Jn 1:4). We become witnesses of Jesus' light through our relationship with him. Interestingly John talks about this relationship with Jesus several times.

- Jesus replied, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and take up residence with him” (Jn 14:23).
- “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him— bears much fruit, because apart from me you can accomplish nothing” (15.5).
- “What we have seen and heard we announce to you too, so that you may have fellowship with us (and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus

Christ). “Thus, we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete” (1 Jn 1:3-4).

Finally, being witnesses of Jesus' light isn't enough. It's not beneficial to others unless we let that light shine.

With that, we come to the third metaphor which is **“The City set on a Hill.”**

Ancient towns were often built of white limestone. They gleamed in the Sun during the day and at night the inhabitants' oil lamps would shed a glow over the surrounding area. Hence these cities served as beacons for directing travelers toward the city as they could be spotted from miles away at night as well as in broad daylight. So, Jesus' audience knew exactly what he was talking about. In the same way, we also must help the weary pilgrims of life to find their way to Christ by shining his light for him.

Then Jesus shifts the focus of his audience from the glow of a city to the glow of a single household. In the ancient Middle East, houses were lit using small clay lamps.

Since those houses were simple one-room structures placing the lamp on a lampstand gave light to the entire house. Jesus used this earthly example to teach a spiritual lesson. That is, **we should not blend in with unbelievers for the fear of offending them** because such behavior is like lighting a lamp and putting it under a basket indeed.

Shining your light isn't always a pleasant experience because the light is not welcomed everywhere for it exposes the works of darkness. The Bible says, “But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them” (Eph 5:13). We have to decide whether we want to ‘please God or please men before we can shine our light before others’ (Jn. 12: 42-43).

Jesus said we shine our light through our good works. Unless you are willing to pay the price you cannot shine your light.

In conclusion, as God has called us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world it makes us the most important group of people on the surface of this earth. It should be our prayer that the Holy Spirit will equip us with His grace to live a life worthy of that calling.