

Matthew 5:13-20

"Shine"

His miracles made Him famous, His message would make Him infamous... Oh not w/the "regular" people (His message would resonate in *them*), but w/the "righteous" people, the *religious* people, those who stood on pedestals of self-aggrandizement.

Jesus would strike a chord in the heart of the religious leaders that would set them decisively against Him. He (in essence) would articulate & demonstrate that for all their meticulous attention to the details of the law, not only did they fall radically short of what it was aiming at in *reality*, but they were (underneath a smokescreen of righteousness) lost in the mire of *hypocrisy* as well...

You see, today we'll touch on what (in large part) the entire message of the Sermon on the Mount pivots around. "What is true righteousness?" What does it really mean to be righteous before God? Jesus will point to the people who were considered the pinnacle of holiness in His day & say, "Unless your righteousness *exceeds* theirs..." (The idea being if their righteousness is a river running between 2 banks, your righteousness has to overflow & radically flood over *both* banks in extreme fashion). "Unless your righteousness *exceeds* the righteousness of the scribes & the Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." In short, our righteousness has to go beyond what's even capable of being achieved, humanly speaking.

W/that single sentence Jesus left the heart of those wanting to be right w/God desperately wondering, "What can I do?" & The heart of the religious leaders thinking, "How dare You!" Jesus was drawing a line in the dirt saying, "You need to completely re-evaluate what it means to be righteous before God." & He was telling them that their best efforts weren't good enough (we'll develop that principle more as we make our way through this Sermon in the coming weeks).

Suffice it to say for now that Jesus was trying to get them to see that righteousness was never about what you can do, but it's found in trusting in what God can do & has done for you. The law does not teach me *how* to be righteous, it shows me how *unrighteous* I truly am. It was never meant to govern me physically but rather it shines a light upon how desperately sick my heart truly is... It shows me my need for a Savior.

Ok. If you weren't w/us last week I'd highly recommend grabbing a copy of that study. We went in to *some* detail that we might gain greater insight on what these beatitudes look like & how it is they go on display in our lives as believers...

We're to be growing & maturing in each of these attributes if we're to be & to become all that Christ has called us to be... But we're to count the cost in following Jesus, because the more we become like *He is*, the more we'll be treated like *He was*.

That's what we were learning as our time came to a close, you may preach the gospel of peace, but in return you may receive persecution. But rejoice (Jesus said) you're in great company. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you, & to enter into the company of the prophets will render great profit in heaven. "Great will be your reward."

Now, knowing the way people will have a tendency to respond to us (not in a mutual gesture of peace, but of persecution) one might think that we're to maybe seek to fly under the radar so as not to ruffle feathers or bring on unfair & unjust treatment. **You know, just abide in some low key fashion until God gets us out of here! Jesus says, "No way, live out loud for Me. If you won't live as salt & light, than how will others 'taste & see' that the Lord is good?" ... Look at Vs 13**

Vs 13-16

Couple things I want to just state from the onset here. Jesus gives us 2 illustrations concerning who we are & how we're to impact the world in which we live; salt & light.

One of the things I want you to see is how these 2 things balance each other out. Salt is hidden (in that it permeates & penetrates), it works secretly & slowly. Light is seen, it works openly & quickly. **For salt to have an effect it's got to make contact; for light to do it's thing it has to be seen. As salt, your contact w/unbelievers will convict them, as light they'll see your good works, rooted in the love of God. Salt speaks to your inward character, light speaks to your outward testimony.** (One is who you are inwardly, the other is what is seen outwardly). What we'll discover is that we can't *change* who we are, but we can *waste* who we are.

Back in Vs 13 Jesus says those who are following Him (gathered around Him), "You are the salt of the earth." **Now to you & me that might not sound like much because salt is such a common commodity in our day. But when Jesus said this it was a jaw dropping, mind blowing kind of statement. Salt was very precious at that time. So much so that it was very common for Roman soldiers (at least in part) to be paid in salt. That's where the phrase, "worth his salt" comes from.**

But what is it about salt that causes Jesus to compare us to this compound (this mineral). I think one thing we can say right off the bat is that salt creates thirst & certainly there is a sense in which we should be creating in people around us a thirst for the living waters of J.C.

There should be something about you, about me that causes people to think w/in themselves, “What you *have*, I *want*.” It’s like your world is falling apart yet you have peace, you just received some bad news yet you’re not anxious *about* it, you’re trusting God w/it. *That’s not normal, but it’s appealing. “I wish I could have that kind of peace, that kind of calmness in the face of this kind of situation.”* There was a layoff at work, 10 of you were sent packing, some are panicking, you have peace, you know God will provide for you. *Who you are in that situation, it makes people thirsty for what you have...*

We know that salt both preserves & heals (or at least arrests decay & corruption). In a day w/out ready refrigeration they would thoroughly salt the meat they weren’t immediately eating so as to keep it from putrefying or rotting. It was common to put salt in a wound so it wouldn’t get infected. You’ve heard the phrase, “you’re putting salt in my wound”, that didn’t just arrive from a theoretical place, it really happened☺.

But as we mentioned, in order for salt to help these things it had to penetrate & permeate. As believers we should have a preserving influence on our culture... The truth is it seems more like our culture is on a radically accelerated downward decaying spiral... Here’s the hard question, what does that say about you & me, we as the church? It seems to me that rather than pointing fingers at political parties or indicting our society it begins w/our repenting! “Lord, have we lost our flavor, our effectiveness?”

I’ve never read in the bible where God places the blame upon the democratic party, or the republican party. But I have seen Him hold accountable those who claim to be godly... Remember this Vs? *“...if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”¹* It starts w/us family... We’re the salt.

We’re to preserve society, keeping from falling into disrepute & disrepair. You might write down & look up Genesis 18-19. If there had been as few as 10 righteous people in the cities of Sodom & Gomorrah it would’ve been enough to preserve them... There is a sense in which we’re holding back the judgment of God. He’s not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance & as long as you’re there, preserving, preventing decay, He’ll hold off... But when God calls the church home, what happens next? Judgment comes... You are the salt of the earth.

But if the salt loses its flavor, it’s saltiness, than what good is it? They would throw it out to fill little potholes or kill weeds, it was just trampled underfoot...

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). [2 Ch 7:14]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

In other words when a Christian loses his/her “flavor” than we’re really serving no eternal purpose anymore, there’s no eternal value to what we’re doing. Now we’re not talking about the scientifically impossible notion of salt becoming flavorless... In the ancient world salt was often mixed w/various impurities. If there are too many impurities than it can’t serve its purpose anymore, it’s time to throw it out.

There you are mining salt from the shores of the sea, you can’t separate all the sand & at some point you seem to have more sand than salt, get rid of it... (That’s a base example but you get the point).

So let’s keep the context. Jesus says, “You preach peace you might get persecuted, but if you try to make peace w/the world to avoid persecution, your role *in* the world is rendered impotent, you won’t fulfill the role that God has ordained for you.”

Listen, people out there are hurting... they’re “wounded”. & I get that psychology & psychiatry & medical science seek to help, but it can only go so far. Because at its root the need isn’t physical, it isn’t mental, it isn’t emotional, it’s spiritual, they need “salt” in their wound, Jesus brings healing & wholeness to the hurting & wounded.

But I’m just going to tell you, if you’re diluting the “salt” that you are... notice Jesus didn’t say “I want to challenge you to become salt” no, in Christ it’s what you are... But if I’m diluting that salt through impurities in my life, maybe certain questionable liberties or I’m entertaining some kind of sin or compromise directly, lowering my standards or whatever. I’m mixing the salt of His love w/the sand of my selfishness... There comes a point where I’m so filled w/impurities that I can render myself ineffective & my life no longer yields any significant impact on the world around me (as it pertains to God’s ability to use me). What do you do with gum that loses its flavor? (Right under your chair)

Let me throw this at you as well. If you’re not serving the Lord somewhere, in some capacity, always taking in but never giving out... Salt needs to be used, applied in order to yield its effect

Vs 14-16

Listen family, I want you to let these words soak in. Jesus didn’t say these things to the philosophical intelligentsia gathered together on Mars Hill in Athens. He wasn’t addressing the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem or the Senate in Rome... These were common, everyday ordinary folks gathered on a hill near the shore of the sea of Galilee.

They weren’t distinguished in intelligence, or wealth or power, but they were drawn to & following *after* Jesus & that made all the difference.

& Let *this* rock your socks off, Jesus didn't wait to give this title till He had taught them for the next 3 yrs. This was at the beginning of His ministry, as soon as *they* commit to *Him*, He begins to shine *through them*.

When you read the very 1st Ch of your bible, we discover a problem already in Vs 2... "Darkness was on the face the deep". But God solves the problem in Vs 3, God said, "Let there be *light*, & there was light."

Here Jesus is recognizing a problem; this world (spiritually speaking) is in darkness. So He gives light. 1st He gives it *to you*, then He wants to shine *through you*. The bible says, "*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light*".²

What that means is that we're not reservoirs, we're conduits. The Light of Christ doesn't simply shine into us, but out through us. We (the church) are like a city on a hill. The illustration envisions a traveler lost, kind of groping about aimlessly in the dark until he sees, unmistakably off in the distance, a "city on a hill" & there are all the lights shining, giving him direction, leading him to safety & shelter.

Listen, this world is in darkness, people are groping about aimlessly, hopelessly & lost, but we're to be shining as the lights of a city on a hill leading them to the safety & shelter that they can find in Christ. Again, notice that Jesus wasn't challenging you & me to be a light; it's what we are. The only question is whether or not we're serving our appropriate purpose.

Let me ask you a question. If you were to rate yourself as a certain kind of light, what would it be? It may sound sorta harsh but I'm gonna be honest w/you, a lot of people have it in their heart to be a red light. You know, the kind of light the military might use when they want to see but don't want to be seen. They might equip their soldiers w/a light that shines just enough for them to see just enough to get by, but the odds of being detected by anyone else are minimal. It's amazing how many Christians actually want to be that kind of light. They want to shine just enough to see *their path*, but they don't really want to be detected by anyone else... They don't want people to know *where* they really are or *who* they really are. We call them "closet Christians" or "secret servants" 😊.

But Jesus wants us to be a giant spotlight, or flood light. You know, those lights you can see from every direction all through the month of October. There it is shining this massive beam into the night sky & you can see it for miles & miles.

² The New King James Version. (1982). [Eph 5:8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& It peaks your curiosity, you want to drive over there & see what's going on, it kind of lures you. It's something exciting, something interesting, you want to go & see.

That's what Jesus wants us to be, that's what He wants this church to be, a massive beam of light shining out in every direction into a dark world. Causing people to be attracted *to* it, fascinated *w/it* that they might be drawn *to* Him, changed *by* Him.

How does that happen? Well, I suppose it can happen through simply doing what God's called us to do *here*, but more than likely it'll come through you being who He's called you to be out *there*! We're a city on a hill, don't be a basket case☺. Don't hide your light, shine bright.

Somewhere down the line some people got the idea that true holiness expressed itself in isolation, climb a mountain, live in a cave or a monastery in separation from the world. That's tantamount to placing your light under a basket, how can anyone see that? It's counterproductive by nature. Jesus would teach us to be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. How can anyone see the light if its not out there shining? How could salt arrest corruption & act as an antiseptic if it's never applied to the wound?

& Jesus takes it to another level when He says that the lamp is placed up on a lampstand. Now we're being intentional about letting others see the light, to benefit *from* the light. As a matter of fact He speaks of the lamp giving light to "all" that are in the house. Don't miss that.

I think that sometimes we're good at giving light to others, but perhaps we don't shine at home like we should. We neglect to let our light shine at home through the way we treat our spouse or snap at our children. Listen, if you're always nagging your husband (ladies) how does he see your light? Or if you're all the time being demanding of your wife, maybe belittling who she is or what she does (men), how does she see your light?

We're to let our light so shine that when others see good works in our lives they glorify our Father who is in heaven. Think of it like this, the things we do shouldn't draw people to think of how cool *we are*, but how great *God is*. Personally, I don't find it pleasing to look directly into light. But I'm grateful for the things that I'm able to see because of that light. I'm thankful for it's illumination so I can see accurately, navigate safely or find things relatively quickly. When your light shines it's *not* so people can see you, but they'll see Jesus, the ways of God, what the word of God looks like in real time... (2 Cor 4:6-7).

Vs 17-18

Now Jesus was teaching some radical things. The religious leaders would accuse Him of having disregard for the law. Jesus says, “No, I didn’t come to destroy (or do away w/or show disregard for) the law. I came to fulfill it.” That is, to bring it to it’s intended end. Now He did have disregard for their traditions & misinterpretation of the law, but He honored the true intent of the law.

We’re about out of time but you need to realize, Jesus *fulfilled* the law in every way. If He didn’t fulfill it, it means He failed, He sinned. Yet He said boldly when squaring off w/the religious leaders, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (Jn 8:46) None of them did, because there was no sin in Him.

He fulfilled all that the law foreshadowed. He fulfilled the types that spoke of Him, He fulfilled all that was written of Him prophetically, all it’s teachings doctrinally, all it’s demands morally & legally & He fulfilled it’s penalty as He made Himself Personally the perfect sacrifice for sin... Jesus lived a life of perfect love & according to Romans 13:10, Gal 5:14 love is the fulfillment of the law.

He fulfilled every detail, that’s what He’s speaking of when He says that not so much as a jot or a tittle will pass from the law till all is fulfilled. The most minute of pen strokes, not so much as one “i” will fail to be dotted or one “t” will fail to be crossed. That’s the essence of what Jesus is saying. That’s how highly God regards His word, even the details of the letters are important to Him.

The Greek word for “assuredly” here in Vs 18 is a word you’re familiar with, “Amen”. Jesus says, “Amen, I say to you.” Now this is unique unto Jesus, no other teacher ever used this phrase. When a prophet would speak in the O.T. & he was assuring you of something what would he say? “Thus says the LORD”; but Jesus never said that did He? He said, “Truly (or assuredly) *I say to you.*” It’s a signature of His deity. His word *is* God’s word, His assurance *is* God’s assurance. & He guarantees us that God’s plan *will not* be set aside even in the smallest of details till all of it is fulfilled.

Vs 19-20

Now I want to comfort you in the fact that even though the law says to make a sacrifice for sin, you’re not *in sin* because you don’t sacrifice bulls or goats. Remember, Jesus *fulfilled* the law, made the perfect sacrifice & we are *in Him* therefore His fulfillment of the law is accredited to us through faith. That’s the whole premise of justification by faith. It’s not what we do, it’s what He’s done & it’s ours to believe upon Him. (Rom 3:21-26)

But the emphasis here is upon not neglecting to obey God's word. We're to share it *with* others & show it *to* others. Now that doesn't make for our righteousness, Christ makes for our righteousness, yet that doesn't negate our necessary obedience to His word, not out of legalism, but out of love.

Vs 20

These were the religious elites of their day. If they had a spice garden, herbs & whatnot they would go into their garden, pluck 9 seeds for them 1 seed for God, they tithed to the "T". If these guys accidentally swallowed a gnat, they gag themselves till they puked because the law said not to eat anything that had blood in it. They were meticulous on every level. Jesus said, "You got to do better than that if you hope to get into heaven..."

Perhaps you're thinking, "There's no way", to which Jesus says, "Exactly". The only way your righteousness will exceed that of the scribes & Pharisees is to receive a different kind of righteousness altogether. There are 2 kinds of righteousness, did you know that? Write it down & look it up later Phil 3:3-9. You can seek to attain to the righteousness that comes through the law (what you do or don't do), or that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

Believe on the Lord J.C. & the river of His righteousness will overflow the banks of your life on every side. You are the salt of the earth, the light of the world, shine openly, intentionally for J.C. & God will be glorified in your life.

Prayer Points:

Father we thank You for Your word, wash us from impurities, those things that pollute & dilute Your capacity to uses us effectively. May we never be ashamed of identifying w/You Jesus, but teach us what it means to live out loud for You, to truly honor You w/our lives. & We thank You for doing for us what we could never do on our own, we believe in You & thank You for the righteousness we've found in You.

I want to ask you a simple question. Has the light of J.C. shined in your soul? Maybe right now it's shining upon you, but Jesus wants to shine through you. He loves you, He's given His life for you, turn from your sin, trust in Him.