

“Salt and Light” Matthew 5:13-16 Shane Hatfield 4/10/22

Okay, guys take a seat, right up here we’ve got two rows open for you. You can sit up there in the front, front and center. God says in Psalm 8 that He uses the praises of little children to defeat His enemies. Jesus tells us that we’ve got to enter the kingdom like little children, helpless and weak. So, that’s one of the reasons we’re going to honor our children today. Another reason why I wanted them to come up here today is to give you a little object lesson. When Jesus taught the sermon on the mount there were crowds of people coming to Him, but the text says that His disciples came forward to hear His teaching. So, it’s likely that either the twelve disciples, or a group of disciples from the crowd, they wanted to learn from Jesus, came to the front as He sat down and opened His mouth. It says He sat down, and He opened His mouth and taught them. That’s typically language for a rabbi sitting down to teach. So, His disciples came up to hear His teaching, but the crowds probably stayed in the back to listen. So, we have the disciples here coming to hear the teaching, and then you guys are the crowds back in the back listening. Toward the end of the sermon on the mount, it says the crowds drew closer, so this is an example of how Jesus taught.

So, last week we started talking about the sermon on the mount. We talked about all these attitudes that we have that can glorify God. Well, this week, what Jesus is going to tell us is that when we live out the Beatitudes, that it helps the world, that it has a positive effect on the world around us. So, here’s the Scripture reading this morning. It’s Matthew 5:13-16. It says:

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.

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.

In the Psalms it says that God’s word is sweeter than the honey on a honeycomb, so I hope you hear God’s word as sweet this morning.

Now, when I was a little kid like you guys, one day I went over to my friend, Austin’s house. I went to play with Austin, and we played in the back yard and we had a good time. We probably jumped on the trampoline a lot, because he had a trampoline. And then he said, ‘I’m hungry, do you want to go get something to eat?’ And I said, ‘Sure!’ He said, ‘How about I go inside, and I make us some sandwiches?’ And I said, ‘Great!’ And he said, ‘What is your favorite kind of sandwich?’ And I said, ‘I like meat and cheese with mayonnaise.’ Does anybody else like meat and cheese with mayonnaise on their sandwiches? We’ve got a few of those people. So, we went inside, and Austin started making me a meat and cheese sandwich with mayonnaise, and he said, ‘Hey, do you want me to put some seasoning salt on it?’ And I said, ‘Seasoning salt, what is that?’ And he goes, ‘Well you put this seasoning salt on it, and it brings out the taste of the meat and it tastes really good.’ So, I said, ‘Okay! Put that seasoning salt on there.’ So, he put the seasoning salt on that sandwich, and I took that meat and cheese sandwich with mayonnaise on it and I bit into it and it was the best sandwich I’d ever had in my whole life. It was so good! It tasted so good. He gave me a vision of what a better sandwich could taste like, okay?

Well, in that same way, what Jesus is saying in this passage is that when we follow Jesus and we live out His teachings, we help the world see a better way to live. We give them a better taste of what life can be like, and we show them how they can have a vision of a better life. Jesus said we do that in two ways, we do that as the salt of the earth and as the light of the world. So, we're going to talk about what it means to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world this morning.

The first thing we see is that Jesus tells us to be the salt of the earth. Did you know that they had salt 2,000 years ago when Jesus lived? That's pretty incredible! They did! They actually had a lot of it because the Dead Sea had a lot of salt in it, that's why it's called the Dead Sea, stuff doesn't grow in it. But salt had two purposes. First, salt made everything taste better, just like it does today. But salt had another purpose that was really important for them and that was preserving their meat. Now, today, when we want to preserve our meat, what do we do? When your parents go to the store and buy a bunch of meat and bring it home, what do they do with it when they get that meat home? They put it in the fridge! Why do they put it in the fridge? Because the cold temperature of the fridge helps preserve that meat, so they either put it in the fridge so they can cook it later, or they put it in the freezer, and they freeze it so you can eat it a lot later! Well, do you think they had refrigerators in Jesus' day? No! They didn't have refrigerators. They didn't have freezers. They didn't have electricity like that! So, what did they do? They took salt and they rubbed it into the meat, and the salt would keep the meat from decaying so that they could preserve it and eat it later.

So, when Jesus says we're the salt of the earth, what He's saying is that we help preserve this world from death and decay and destruction. We keep it from becoming rotten meat that you don't want to eat because it'll make you sick, alright? Now, the reason why the earth is going through this process of death and decay is because of sin! When sin came into the world, it caused everything to break down, so it gets bad. Everything goes from order to chaos. Think about your room! Your room starts out clean, and then what happens to it? It gets messy, right? If you don't do anything, your room is going to go from order to chaos! Think about your yard. If you don't do anything to your yard, what's going to happen to it? It's going to get messy, right? You're going to have weeds and vines and trees and some of the dads are like, 'Oh no, my yard is a mess right now. It's going from order to chaos.' If you don't do anything to meat, if you just leave it out, it begins to rot and stink! If we don't take care of our bodies, they begin to break down. If we don't take care of our relationships, relationships are really hard, then they begin to break down. Everything in this world, that's a law of thermodynamics, is moving from order to chaos, and that's because of sin.

But what Jesus says is that when we follow His teachings, when we obey Jesus, we're actually preserving the world. We're actually making it a better place. We give people a taste of what it looks like to not be moving from order to chaos, but to experience life. Think about it this way: Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." So, when you're a peacemaker around your house, guess what you're doing? You're helping preserve it and you're showing the world what it looks like to live a better life. Okay, how can you be a peacemaker? Maybe when you're fighting over toys, we don't fight over them, we share them! Right? Maybe we don't have a fistfight to see who sits in the front seat of a car, maybe we give our siblings the front seat in the car. Maybe instead of fighting over the last cookie, we share the last cookie or maybe we even make cookies for our neighbor and we take them over there and we show them what it's like to taste and see that the Lord is good because somebody is loving and kind and serving for them. There are all kinds of ways that we can help people see that the Lord is good.

So, what I'd like you to do when you go home tonight is talk to your parents. How can we be the salt of the earth? How can we show the world a better way to live? How can we give them a taste of the good life? Okay? Did you know that Jesus told His disciples to have salt in them? What do you think it means to have salt in you? How can we have salt in us? Do you think Jesus was saying, 'Put lots and lots of salt on your food'? Do you think that's what He meant? No! It's not what He meant. But this is what He meant, Jesus is the thing that holds the entire world together. Paul says, "In Him, everything is held together." And if you have Jesus, then you have the Holy Spirit in you and if you have the Holy Spirit in you, then you can be salt to the earth and you can help the world be a better place. So, that's the first thing Jesus tells us is that as we live out His teachings, then we are the salt of the earth.

The second thing that Jesus tells us is that we're the light of the world. Okay, do you guys have lights in your house? You do, don't you! Lights are very important. Did you know that they had lights in Jesus' day? But they weren't lights like a switch that you could flip on, they had lamps. When the sun would go down, they would have a lamp with oil, and they would take a torch, or some kind of fire and they would light it and they would have light in their house. Now, light is super important for us, isn't it? Light does a lot of important things. What does light do? Light reveals! Think about it. If you wake up in the middle of the night and you have to go to the bathroom, what's the first thing you want to do? Turn on the light, right? Because if you don't, you're going to step on a Lego and that hurts really bad, doesn't it, parents! Can I get an amen? Is there anything worse than stepping on a Lego in the middle of the night? Those things are razor sharp! It hurts! Or you might accidentally walk into mom and dad's room, you might go into the wrong room. One time, Emmarie woke up in the middle and she was looking for the bathroom and she wandered into our room. She couldn't see where she was going! So, light reveals things! When we're the light of the world, when we follow Jesus, we reveal God to the world! People can see God through us.

Light also guides people. Did you know that in Jesus' day they didn't have compasses and maps and GPS, so when they were on a ship and they wanted to know which way to go, what did they use? They used the stars! They used the sun. They used the moon. It guided them, it navigated them! When we follow the teachings of Jesus, we guide people to Jesus. We show them how they can find Jesus, and then, when they get there, they find true life. Because do you know what light does? Light gives life! Right now, Tucker is doing a plant experiment at the house and when he first started his experiment the teacher said, 'Okay, you've got to take these plants home and keep them indoors and put them on a windowsill where they can get light, but you can't take them outside.' Now, the problem in our house is we don't have a lot of direct sunlight into our house, so Tucker put his plants up on the windowsill, but they didn't get a lot of direct sunlight and what happened to them? They died. Because light gives life! So, we had to replant his plants and we found a better spot and now his plant is growing. He's not going to get an F, don't worry. There's grace in seventh grade science. When we follow Jesus, then we point people to the light of Jesus! In Him, they find life. They find joy. They find happiness.

One time a pastor told me about a time when his daughter went on a youth retreat, and when you guys get a little bit bigger you guys can go on a youth retreat too, and they took a friend from her soccer team with them, and that friend wasn't a Christian. She had never been around Christians. She just went on the retreat because she liked to play sports, and when she got there, all of the people were nice and loving and welcoming to her. She thought, 'Man, these people are different. They are such a joy to be around.' And by the end of the week, she wanted

to become a Christian because she found true life. She saw it. She experienced it through these people.

So, as the light of the world we reveal the good life to people! We guide them to God. We show them how they can find life. So, we can be the salt of the earth and we can give people a taste of the good life, and we can be the light of the world and we can help people see that the good life is found in Jesus.

I want to close with this, and this is for parents and families and kids here, okay? What I want you to think about is your future. What do you want for your future? What do you want for the future of your kids? Maybe what did you think about for your future? Richard Pratt is a pastor and a theologian, and he does a lot of mission work and he was speaking at a missionary conference once and he was talking to them, and he said, "If you ask the average non-Christian college student on campus, 'What is your goal in life?' 'What is your good life?' You know what they would probably say? They would probably say, 'Well, I would like to make some good memories with friends in college, then graduate college with a decent GPA, it doesn't have to be a 4.0 but good enough to have a good resume. Then I would like to have a job after college. I know there's no perfect job, but I would like for it to be something that I enjoy, something that pays well. I would like to get married to a wife that loves me. I know there will be lots of struggles, but I would like to be married for the rest of my life in a good marriage. I would like to have healthy kids who grow up to be independent and respectable. Then, when I get old, I would like to have enough money to retire, travel around, and then die at a good age with family around me.' That doesn't sound like a bad life. But, if you ask the average Christian college student what they want for the good life, what do you think they would say? What's their vision of the good life? They would probably say, 'You know what, I want to go to college and make some memories with my friends. I want to graduate with a decent GPA, doesn't have to be a 4.0 but good enough to have a good resume. I want to have a good family. I want to have a good wife and a good job.' Their vision would be the exact same thing as a non-Christian's except they might say, 'I want to do it all for God's glory, and then when I die, I want to go to heaven and be with Jesus.' They might say, 'Well, the non-Christian might do it for their own reasons, and the Christian might do it for God's reasons.'"

And the question we have to ask ourselves is, 'Does Jesus make an impact on our life every single day?' Does He transform us into salt and light, moment by moment, day by day? What we find in the Scriptures is that by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, our whole life becomes transformed. You see, the world lives based on works, and we live based on grace. The world lives for their own glory, and we get to live for God's glory! The world doesn't have forgiveness, but we have forgiveness in Christ! In every single thing we do we can be salt, and we can be light and we can experience the light and life of Jesus each and every day.

So, do you know what I want for you guys? What I want for us? I want us to be the church, and as the church, we're going to be the salt that helps the world taste and see that Jesus is good and that life with Him is good, and we can be light that reveals true life in Jesus each and every day. We can't do that on our own, can we guys? We have to have God to help us. So, what do we need to do? How do we ask God to help us? We pray! That's right. Let's pray, okay?