

Salt and light
Matt 5:13-20
January 14, 2018 – Epiphany 2
Big idea: Christians without salt and light are worthless

Christian is a verb as well as a noun

“Pastor” is a verb as well as a noun. It describes what I do as well as the office that I hold. I am to teach, comfort, help, and lead. If I just hold the office but do none of those things, then I am worthless and God would toss me away and take the office from me.

Likewise Christian is a verb as well as a noun. It is who you are, but it is also what you do. You are to be people who change your world and lead people from darkness. You are to flavor the world so that it tastes like Christ and show his light so that the darkness of evil is shoved away.

You are not to be like the Pharisees of Jesus’ day who thought that they deserved special honor just because of who they were while they seldom lifted a finger to help people or to show them what it meant to be a Jew and to have the blessings that God wanted them to have.

You are salt and light. You are active in this world and if the world is falling apart, you are at least partially responsible for it means that you have not done your calling and evil has permeated you rather than you pushed darkness out with the light of Jesus.

We are to be salt

A Flavoring our world v. 13a *"You are the salt of the earth*

Salt flavors our food. You can taste it on your popcorn or taste it on a cracker. Without the salt flavor, those foods and many others would just not be right. So it is to be with the world. It is to taste like Christians. It is to taste of our values and character.

Christians are to permeate the values of our society. People are to know that it is right to be kind and loving to one another. They are to know that it is not right to steal or to commit adultery. That should be ingrained in the fabric of our society so that we just taste that way.

When Christians are flavored by the world more than they flavor the community that they live in, they become people without character. The society promotes sin and Christians think it is OK to tell a white lie or to cheat on their spouse. The values of the world go downhill because Christians don’t live them.

And like salt that has lost its flavor because it is not pure, Christians will be thrown out by God and by society. The church will be seen to be worthless because it is not different than the world. Christians are to flavor their world so that society has morals and values instead of being selfish.

B Preserving it from evil v.13b *But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men*

Salt is a great preservative. Before refrigeration, meat was routinely prepared with salt. The salt would keep bacteria from ruining the meat and making it unfit to eat. Yet, packed in salt, meat can easily last for weeks for long journeys or in storage for later use.

Christians are to be a preservative in their communities. Evil likes to corrupt a society until it has no value. Christians are to preserve society by doing so many acts of goodness that the evil of society is overwhelmed. They are to live upright and just lives so that evil is seen for what it is.

When we become just as evil as a society, then evil becomes the norm. Lying, cheating, adultery become the norm. Men may protest when women are treated badly or when corporations steal from the customers that they have, but they cannot change such a society.

Only when moral people do so many moral things can values become a bulwark against evil. Evil becomes snuffed out in its infancy because everyone admits that it is evil. Christians end up lifting up the society and making it uncomfortable for evil to exist.

We are to be light

C Showing the truth v. 14 *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.*

Light shows us what is there. Walk into a dark room and you have no idea whether it is a bedroom or a living room until you run into a piece of the furniture. Turn on the lights and the truth is immediately obvious. Light makes everything clear.

Christians are to be a light for their world. They are to show what it means to be a loving father or a faithful friend. They are to show to the world how we live if we want to be respected and useful members of society. Our lives are a neon example of what a person should be in this life.

When Christians are quiet when they should speak or go along with the crowd in sinful behavior, they cover their light. When Christians ignore the needs of others instead of showing what it means to be caring, they become darkness in a very dark world.

Christians are to live out the truth of the Bible with its love and morals so much that people don't even have to read the bible to know what God looks like. They should see the light in our lives so that they know what God's love looks like and how that light will change their world so they can see clearly.

D Guiding others from danger v.15 *Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.*

A light is also a guide through the darkness. Go camping and a simple trip to the bathhouse can be a scary experience. Take a flashlight and it will show you every pothole and tree in your way. You will get there safely because you see your path clearly and avoid the dangers.

Christians are to be such guides for others. Their light shines as they pray with a friend who is struggling. Their light shines as they open the scriptures and provide answers to a neighbor or coworker whose life is broken. God has given you the tools to be a light in this world and help those who need a friend.

Christians who refuse to take the time to help a neighbor or who have been so lax in their own bible study that they don't feel comfortable even praying with a friend are useless. People around them are struggling in the darkness and they are unwilling to provide even a candle of light.

Such Christians will find that they receive little light when they need it most. They have kept the light of Jesus from shining in their lives so that it can guide others. Like a burnt out candle, the light will not be there when they need it most. We are to be mentors and lights to others so God can light up our lives.

The power of Salt and light

Salt and light point to the Lord v.16 *In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

The very reason to be salt and light is to point people to our Lord. We are salt so that our Lord can permeate our society and have a beneficial influence on society. As we live out our lives as faithful fathers and helpful friends others are led to the Lord and want to be His people as well.

As we light the way of truth we help others see how the ways of our heavenly father are indeed the way of a happy life. We help people see the wisdom in God's ways so that they don't stumble in the darkness of evil. We become a guide, a helper and a friend bringing light into a cruel world.

Our salt and light point people to God so that he can help them and so that they can live with his blessings instead of living with the culture's idea of what a great life is really like. We want them to have a life that is filling with happiness instead of one that is filled with false values that can only disappoint.

Salt and light are ways to change the world and show the truth so that the world around us is a better place filled with right values and helpful people. It will come when Christians have the courage to live out their faith so that all can see what God can do for us and in us.

The world is going to hell and we are at fault

It might be unpopular, but I will say it anyway. The world is going to hell and we Christians are at fault.

We often look around and complain about the state of the world and the persecution that we face. Yet, Christians do not have the courage to live out their faith and to be examples.

It is amazing what Christians can do. It was Christians that changed the Roman Empire. It was Christians in Poland that had a large part in bringing down Soviet Russia. When Christians stand up for their values and live them out in a society, the culture can't stand up to the power of God.

Yes, you can change the world. You can live out your values in a way that everyone sees them. You can speak the truth even when people don't want to hear it. You can care when no one else seems to be willing to take the time. All those things change the world and keep it sliding down into evil.

If the world is going to be different, it has to start with us. It has to start one day at a time and one action at a time. We must light up the world with God's truth and love. We must salt the world so that it has God's flavor. The world is going to hell and only the salt and light of God can change it.

Rev. Mark R. Etter
Bethany Lutheran Church
3501 Turkeyfoot Road
Erlanger, Kentucky 41017
859 331-3501

Church at 9 PM
Sunday school at 10:15
Everyone is welcome