



A. P. 08-12-18

HIGHLIGHT: Matthew 5:13-16

H

¹³“You are the salt of the earth. 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 underfoot.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither 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. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

E

EXPLAIN

The Sermon on the Mount is the longest piece of teaching that we have recorded from Jesus, and contains some of the most often quoted (and misquoted) pieces of Scripture from the entire Bible. Among the first things that He says in this famous sermon is what we read today, about Salt and Light. In this passage, Jesus draws a sharp line between those who follow Him and those who don't: Followers of Christ will have as profound an impact on the world around them as salt and light do to those they touch.

v.13 In the first century, salt was important: it was used for cooking and flavor, for fertilization, and, most importantly, as a preservative. Since refrigeration was nonexistent, people would rub meat or spoilable food in salt, which would at once flavor it and slow decay. Even a little salt went a long way in preventing rot from setting in.

When Jesus says, “if the salt should lose its taste,” He is not necessarily talking about salt becoming less salty. As a chemical compound, salt (sodium chloride) is stable and does not become less salty over time. However, salt in the first century often came from a salt marsh or salt deposits, rather than from evaporation of salt water, meaning that if people were not careful, their salt would be mixed with substances that would dilute its saltiness—and would make it useful only for killing unwanted vegetation (done by trampling it underfoot).



v.14 “Light” is an almost universal religious symbol. Present in just about every religion, whether it is in reference to “inner light” or outright worship of the sources of light, light is an effective metaphor for Truth, the touch of the Divine, and the vanquishing of darkness (read: Evil). However, Jesus takes “light” talk to a different level: He calls His followers the light of the world. Jews regarded themselves as lights to the world (see Paul’s comments in Romans 2:17-24), but the true light was to be the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 42:6-7; 49:6), who sent His disciples out to the nations.

v.16 Men are not saved by their works, but they *are* distinguished by them. If salt is good, it is going to do the things that salt does: flavor, fertilize, and preserve. If light is in darkness, it is going to shine. As followers of Christ, we are to be that salt and light without mixing ourselves with something that is going to hinder what Christ has made us to be.

A

APPLY

1. **What stuck out to you or challenged you in what you read in the text?**
2. **Salt is commonly used to purify, season, and preserve. Have you ever been around someone whose presence seemed to purify, season, and preserve the people around them? What was being around that person like?**
3. **How do you think the world views Christians today? How do you think the world wants Christians to behave? How should Christians behave, in light of both of these things?**
4. **As believers, what can we do to act as salt and light to the people around us? What kind of reaction do you think that people will have to that?**
5. **Salt cannot “lose” saltiness, but it can have its saltiness diluted down to nothing by outside influences. What are things that reduce Christian’s effectiveness in the world around them? What are things that reduce your effectiveness to those around you?**

R

RESPOND

- **Reflect on your answer to question five. What are things you need to cut out in order to effectively be salt and light to the people in your life?**

