

Sunday Morning Message

October 8, 2023

Title – *Salt and Light*

Text – Matthew 5:14 – 16

Congregational Reading – Matthew 5:14 – 16

Introduction to the Gospels and Matthew

Last week, in our daily devotional reading, we entered the New Testament. The first four books of the New Testament are called the Gospels because they tell us about the good news regarding the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, including the accounts of his death, burial, and resurrection for our sins. These four Gospels are both historical as well as doctrinal. The fact that there are four Gospels, and not just one complete account may be accounted for by the intention of the Holy Spirit to reach four representative groups. Matthew wrote to the Jews presenting Jesus as the promised Messiah; Mark wrote to the Romans and portrayed Jesus as the servant of the Lord; Luke wrote to Theophilus (for the Greeks) picturing Jesus as the perfect man; and John wrote for the world with his portrait of Jesus as God. Three of the Gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke – are referred to corporately as “the Synoptic Gospels,” because they are very similar to one another. John’s Gospel is excluded from that classification because it has many characteristics that distinguish it from the other three.

What do we know about Matthew?

Matthew (Levi) - Matthew 9:9-10; Mark 2:14 – 17; Luke 5:27 – 32

1. He was the son of Alphaeus. (Mark 2:14) He may have been the brother of James the Less who was also a son of Alphaeus. (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13)
2. He was a tax collector (a publican) in Capernaum. The title, “publican,” was closely associated with the word sinners. (Luke 15:1) As a tax collector, he was hated by the Jews for two reasons: The first was that they associated him with the occupying Roman government for whom he worked. The second is that tax collectors were typically corrupt people who were known to extort from people as much as they could get without any objection from the Roman authority.
3. He left all to follow his Saviour.
4. He was a soul winner. He invited the Lord so that his friends could be saved.
5. He was the first of the four writers to record his account. It is believed by many that the order in the Bible is the chronological order of writing.

6. The theme of his account is the King and His Kingdom. The word, “kingdom,” is used over 50 times.
7. Matthew was a Jew, and his primary target is the Jewish people. He is well acquainted with Jewish religion and custom. His gospel is concerned with the things that the Jewish people would be interested in, such as fulfillment of O. T. prophecy, lineage from the line of David, fulfillment of the Law, etc.
8. Tradition records that Matthew was martyred by being nailed to the ground and beheaded. John Foxe records a slightly different account of his death:

The scene of his labors was Parthia, and Ethiopia, in which latter country he suffered martyrdom, being slain with a halberd (a combination battle axe and spear) in the city of Nadabah, A.D. 60

Introduction to Today’s Message

This morning, we are examining a portion of the famous message that Jesus preached called *The Sermon on the Mount*. This message contains quite a few of the very familiar teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. In this sermon, Jesus speaks about the Kingdom, which Christ will set up some day here on the earth. Sometimes, we refer to the Kingdom as the Millennial reign of Christ, or the Millennium, because it will last for 1000 years. Christ will literally rule and reign on the earth during this period, and Jerusalem will be the Capitol of the World.

The principles found in the Sermon on the Mount and in other similar messages in the gospels will be the rule of law during the Millennium. However, these principles also should apply today to those of us who are the children of God; to those who have been saved. We who are saved have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling inside of us, and the Spirit of God within us is working, transforming us, and re-creating us into the very image of Christ.

You will notice as we study this message that the principles contained in it go far beyond the Old Testament Law.

Read Matthew 5:17 – 20

The principles contained in the Sermon on the Mount have been called “the rules for the redeemed”. They are the reasonable service of a people who have been purchased with the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. These principles make very little sense to most people. Living by these principles is totally impossible for the lost world around us, and they are even very difficult for this carnal generation of worldly Christians. But, for the Christian who is yielded to and filled by the Spirit of God within him, they are not only possible, but they are also easy, and make perfect sense.

Transition

This morning, we are going to discuss two of the principles contained in the Sermon on the Mount: the principles of salt and light.

Read Matthew 5:13 – 16

Here's how it works:

- 1 God saves us.
- 2 The Holy Spirit of God comes to dwell within us.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:15-17)

"That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise," (Ephesians 1:12-13)

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

- 3 He teaches us His Word.
- 4 We live out His Word.

As we live out the principles of Christ in our lives and preach the principles of God with our words, we are influencing and impacting the world around us. We are showing them something very different from what they see in the rest of the lost world.

According to Jesus, as we live according to the principles that He teaches, our lives will be like salt and light to the world around us.

I. The Principle of Salt (v. 13)

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men." (Matthew 5:13)

A. Salt Sustains – acts as a preservative. The world is in spiritual and moral decay. The salt of Christian doctrine should be acting as a preservative, slowing the decay.

B. Salt Seasons

Illustrate – my dad used to load up his food with salt.

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." - (Colossians 4:6)

C. Salt Stings

When you pour salt in a wound it stings. The biblical positions that Christians are called upon to take and stand for in this world are often not popular. They will often have a stinging effect on the world around us. However, while we should certainly have a strong position on the issues that matter to God, let us not be guilty of having an unkind or unloving disposition.

"Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." (Colossians 4:5-6)

D. Salt Softens

We use salt to melt the hard ice that forms on our roads in the wintertime.

E. Salt Spawns (Creates) Thirst

Salt makes you thirsty.

I think that Jesus' reference to salt in this verse has to do with the fact that our presence in this world will make many uncomfortable (sting) with how we live and what we say. But to others, we will be a source of great blessing, and we may even cause some to thirst for God. Our words and actions will also help soften their hard hearts.

Illustration – SALT - Sodium is an extremely active element found naturally only in combined form; it always links itself to another element. Chlorine, on the other hand, is the poisonous gas that gives bleach its offensive odor. When sodium and chlorine are combined, the result is sodium chloride--common table salt--the substance we use to preserve meat and bring out its flavor. Love and truth can be like sodium and chlorine. Love without truth is flighty, sometimes blind, willing to combine with various doctrines. On the other hand, truth by itself can be offensive, sometimes even poisonous. Spoken without love, it can turn people away from the gospel. When truth and love are combined in an individual or a church, however, then we have what Jesus called "the salt of the earth," and we're able to preserve and bring out the beauty of our faith. (David H. Johnson)

Salty Christians are fulfilling their purpose in life.

II. The Principle of Light (vs. 14 – 16)

Read Matthew 5:14 - 16

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” (Isaiah 9:2)

The verse of Scripture referenced above deals with the birth of Christ. When Christ was born in the earth, he poked a huge hole in the darkness of a world that had been without light for a long time. Christ is light, and light equals righteousness and holiness; and it is also synonymous with spiritual understanding.

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

Light is not something that God has or something that God can produce; it is what He is. Peter, James, and John saw a glimpse of this light on the Mount of Transfiguration. John saw it again when he was on the Isle of Patmos and given the Revelation. Paul saw this light on the road to Damascus when the Lord gloriously saved him. All of these examples were actual physical manifestations of the light of God. However, when He came, He revealed to the world more than just Physical light: he delivered to the world a spiritual brightness that many had seen and received; and many more continue to receive to this day.

If Christ came and delivered this light to us 2000 years ago, and many millions have received this light from Him via the Holy Spirit, then why is this world still very dark. Jesus told us to shine the light to the dark world around us. It appears that Christians have become good at hiding their light and blending in with the darkness of the world.

You would think with all the millions of lights out there that should be shining, the world would be pretty bright; yet it continues to dwell in darkness. Why? Because God’s people are not allowing the light of Christ to radiate and reflect through them to the world around them. They are covering their candles with a bushel instead of elevating it on a candlestick.

Three thoughts regarding the failure of the Christian to shine the light of Christ:

A. We fail to shine the light when we fail to separate from the darkness.

Instead of increasing our light, we often participate in things that are very dark: things that are inconsistent with light. Light repels darkness; they cannot dwell together. So, for the Christian to dwell in darkness, He has to douse His light. He must quench the Spirit of God that dwells within Him.

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19)

By the way, unfortunately, the verse above oftentimes applies to the Christian as well as to the world.

The Bible tells us to:

Come out from among them...

Love not the world...

Be not conformed to this world...

B. We fail to shine the light when we fail to saturate ourselves in the light of the Word of God.

The Word of God is like the generator that recharges the spiritual batteries of your light.

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” (Psalm 119:105)

“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psalm 119:130)

Communion with God through His word is the only way to recharge the spiritual batteries of your flashlight, or to re-fuel your lantern. We need to be in the Word of God daily, and in the House of God whenever the doors are open, and with the people of God as much as possible.

Faith cometh by hearing...

C. We fail to shine the light when we shield the light from reaching those around us.

This has more to do with fear than anything else. We have the light, and we desire to shine it; but we are so intimidated by the world around us that we conceal it. It is time that we decide to take a stand, and decide once and for all whose side we are on. We belong to God. We owe this world nothing but the light of Christ. Get out of the way, and let His light shine through you.

“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;” (Philippians 2:15)

Who turned out the lights?

This world ought to be blazing with the light of Christ with all the professing Christians out there. Why is it so dark? One Spirit-filled Christian on the job ought to be enough to wipe out the darkness in that place.

Christian – don’t cover your light. Let it shine to the world around you. Let them see your love for Christ and a genuine love for people. Let them see that you are not afraid to be different from this lost, sinful, and dark world around you.

Salt and Light. How salty are you? How brightly are you shining the light of God?

Illustration – Sophie the Scrubwoman

“I vas called to scrub und preach. I vas a borned preacher, und as I vas poor, I learned to vork. I do good vork, so people vants me; but if they haf me, they must haf the preach also. I scrub as unto the Lord, und preach to all in the house.”

A rare character of German descent, Sophie Lichtenfels lived in a one-room apartment only a block away from her beloved church, the Gospel Tabernacle in New York City. Born four days apart from A. B. Simpson, she loved and prayed for her pastor and gave of her meager income to support the missionary outreach he initiated. Although she was uneducated, she wanted desperately to be a missionary herself.

“For 12 years I prayed, ‘Oh, Father, make me a foreign mishener. I vant to go to foreign lands and preach.’ Und Father say, ‘Sophie, stop. Where were you borned?’ ‘Germany, Father.’ ‘Where are you now?’ ‘In America.’ ‘Well, ain’t you a foreign mishener already? And who lives on the floor above you?’ ‘A family of Svedes.’ ‘Und on the floor above them?’ ‘Why, some Svitzers.’ ‘Und in the rear house are Italians, und in a block away some Chinese. Do you think I will send you a thousand miles away to the foreigner und heathen, when you got them all around, und you nefer care enough about them to speak vit them about their soul?’

“I had some money saved up; und I learnt if I give a few dollars, I could send a boy to school in Japan. I do it, and now he is mishener among his own people. One day I hear about the people down South. ‘Vell,’ Father said, ‘Sophie, you can give to that sure’; but I vas stingy-like. I felt bad, und Father seemed to say, ‘All you haf I gif you, und you won’t gif a little back.’ I feel worser until I gif enough to send a woman to teach. Und now I haf a woman teaching for me down South. So I was in Japan, down South, und here in New York—preaching in three places, like as though I vas triplets!”

When Sophie died—interestingly only four days after the death of her beloved Dr. Simpson—almost every mission of New York and a number from Philadelphia were represented at her memorial service. Many told of the great blessing she had been and of the number of souls she had won to Christ. In a fitting tribute to the great faith of this humble woman, the flowers from Dr. Simpson’s funeral were held over for hers.

Conclusion

We are to be both salt and light to the world around us. These metaphors clearly picture the responsibility that we must both penetrate the darkness with our light as well preserve the world from decay with our truth in love.

These metaphors have often been used to balance the responsibilities that we have socially to care for the needy in a sin-cursed world while at the same time providing the ultimate cure, which is the gospel. We certainly want to shine the light and freely share the love of Christ by helping people with their earthly needs, but we must also not neglect the obligation to preach the truth in love to a people who are biblically ignorant. We certainly want to make sure that people have enough food to meet their physical requirements, but we also want to see to it the food that we give them has some salt on it to satisfy their spiritual need as well.

Salt and Light – How salty are you as a Christian? How much of the light and love of Christ are you shining to the world around you? Don't hide your light. Don't hold back on the salt.