

SALT OF THE EARTH; LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Text: Matthew 5:13-16

The Beatitudes were the opening words of the famous Sermon on the Mount. This sermon takes up three chapters in Matthew 5 through 7. I would like for us to continue this sermon, because one point of our Lord's message leads to another. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, in commenting on this passage we are about to cover, said, "Having seen what the Christian is, we now come to consider how the Christian should manifest this. Or, if you prefer it, having realized what we are, we must now go on to consider what we must be." Let's talk about this manifestation.

1. An Address to All

Who is the salt of the earth? Who is the light of the world? The answer is given in the old English, which is not always apparent in the newer translations. The Authorized Version of 1611 has borne true to the Koine Greek language from whence we translate the New Testament. In Matthew 5:13 it reads, "Ye are the salt of the earth...." Matthew 5:14 reads, "Ye are the light of the world...." The word "ye" is a plural expression meaning "all." In a similar fashion, the Great Commission states, "...Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). We are all responsible to be witnesses in this world. G. Campbell Morgan wrote, "Jesus, looking out over the multitudes of His day, saw the corruption and the disintegration of life at every point. He saw its spoliation and because of His love of the multitudes, He knew the thing they needed most was salt in order that the corruption would be arrested. He saw them wrapped in gloom, sitting in darkness, groping amidst fogs and mists, and He knew that they needed, above everything else, light."

When someone says, "Please pass the salt," we don't reach in the saltshaker and take one grain of salt; we pass a container of the substance. When the Lord referred to us as being the light of the world, He said, "...A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matthew 5:14b), meaning, it is the collective witness of all of us shining forth into the darkness.

Here is another passage where the plural "ye" is emphasized: I Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

2. An Appetite to Create

In Matthew 5:13a, Jesus said, "Ye are the salt of the earth...." Salt, from ancient days until now, was and still is primarily used to flavor food. Christians have

God within them and therefore, like salt changes the flavor of food, we influence our environment. Job 6:6 asks, "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?" President Woodrow Wilson related an interesting story. He said, "I was in a very common place. I was sitting in a barber chair when I became aware that a personality had entered the room. A man had come quietly in upon the same errand as myself, to have his hair cut, and sat in the chair next to me. Every word the man uttered, though it was not in the least didactic, showed a personal interest in the man who was serving him. And before I got through with what was being done for me, I was aware that I had attended an evangelistic service, because Mr. D.L. Moody was in that chair. I purposely lingered in the room after he had left and noted the singular effect that his visit had brought upon the barbershop. They talked in undertones. They didn't know his name, but they knew that something had elevated their thoughts. And I felt that I left that place as I should have left the place of worship. My admiration and esteem for Mr. Moody became very deep indeed."

Not only does salt influence, but salt heals. In Ezekiel 16:4, we see God referring to Jerusalem's fallen state by using this metaphor, "...neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee, thou wast not salted at all, nor swaddled at all." Salt was used as an antiseptic for a baby as soon as it was born to address any nicks or scratches that would fester into infection.

We see in Scriptures such as II Chronicles 13:5 and Leviticus 2:13 salt is used to symbolize covenant. Christians are in covenant with God and we are to be ambassadors for Christ to help others be reconciled to God and to establish covenant with God through Christ.

Salt preserves. Before the days of refrigeration, salt was often used to preserve meat. II Thessalonians 2:7 and 8 point out that when the residency of the Holy Spirit (which is the Church) is removed at the rapture, all iniquity is loosed on the earth.

When we lose our testimony and influence for good, Jesus said we are like salt that has lost its savour. We are "...good for nothing..." (Matthew 5:13b). I have read that there are two things that deteriorate the saltiness of salt: exposure to the elements and too close proximity to the earth. Our Lord wants to keep us in the world, but away from the evil in the world (John 17:15-17). Too much exposure and too close proximity to the world will not only cause us to lose our savour, "...but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men" (Matthew 5:13c).

3. An Assignment to Keep

Matthew 5: 14-16, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

The Lord Jesus said, "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). Romans 10:17 tells us, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." The result is found in Psalm 119:130a: "The entrance of thy words giveth light...." Thus we may boldly say with Psalm 27:1a, "The LORD is my light and my salvation...." Since the Lord who is the Light has come into our hearts, we are to do what the children's song of our youth tells us to do: "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine!" In Matthew 13:43a we find, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father...." II Corinthians 4:6 says, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." It was said of Robert Murray M'Cheyne that people, seeing his face lit up with a hallowed expression, fell on their knees to accept Jesus Christ as personal Savior.

We are not to be swallowed up of this present darkness. Jesus used the example that we are to be a city on a hill, not hidden beneath the basket. Our good works that come as a result of being saved and dedicated to Christ become a drawing point to Christ. Philippians 2:15 reminds us, "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." We are to be guiding the way to Jesus! At the end of his life the atheist, Bertrand Russell said in his final statement, "Philosophy has proved a washout to me." We have the answer and when we live in such a way that our lives are "salty," we will make others thirsty for Christ. Then we may assist them with the light we have in Jesus to not only find the Way, but to change the world in which we live. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, "Most competent historians are agreed in saying that what undoubtedly saved England from a revolution such as was experienced in France at the end of the 18th Century was nothing but the evangelical revival. This was not done because anything was done directly, but because masses of individuals had become Christians and they were living this better life. They had this higher outlook. The whole political situation was affected, and the great acts of Parliament which were passed in the last century (19th) were mostly due to the fact that there were such large numbers of individual Christians found in the land."

Our good friend, John Bishop tells of a time he was lost in the woods in the middle of the night and after much searching he resigned himself that he was to die in the freezing temperatures. After a heart-searching prayer, he saw a faint light in the distance and followed it. It was the small light in the bathroom of their house. It wasn't a floodlight, it was just a little light that was shining through the cold, dark night. Do not underestimate the power of your influence when you are the light!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Johnny Pope". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.