

Sermon Notes for October 3, 1999

**The Sermon on the Mount
Is A Christian To Be In the World
Or Of The World?
Matthew 5:13-16**

Opening:

Jorge Rodriquez was the meanest, orneriest bandit on the Texas-Mexico border. The guy would often slip across the line, raid the banks of South Texas, and steal ‘em blind. Before they could catch him, he would race back into Mexico and hide out. No matter how hard the law tried, they could never catch him.

Finally the Texans got fed up with this nonsense and decided to put the toughest Texas Ranger they had on the case. Sure enough, that got the job done. After only a few days of searching, the Ranger found the bandit in a dingy, dusty saloon south of the border. He bolted into the bar, pulled both guns, and yelled, “Okay, stick ‘em up, Jorge; you’re under arrest! I know you’ve got the money.”

Suddenly a little guy over in the corner butted in. “Wait, wait . . . just a minute, senor,” he said. **“Jorge does not speak English. He’s my amigo, so I’ll translate for you.”**

The Ranger explained, “Look, we know he’s the bandit we’ve been looking for. We know he’s taken thousands and thousands of dollars—about a million bucks, actually. We want it back now. Either he pays up or I’ll fill him full of holes. You tell him that!”

“Okay, okay! I’ll tell him . . . I’ll tell him.” So the little fellow turned to Jorge and repeated in Spanish everything the Ranger had said. The Texas Ranger, not knowing a word of the language, waited for the bandit’s reply.

Jorge listened, frowned, then responded in Spanish, **“Okay, they got me. Tell him to go down to the well just south of town, count four stones down from the top of the well, then pull out the one loose stone. All the money I have stolen I’ve hidden behind the stone.”**

Then the clever little translator turned to the Texas Ranger and translated with a shrug, **“Jorge, says, ‘Go ahead, you big mouth; go ahead and shoot ‘cause I’m not telling you where the money is.’”**

Separation

**Believe as I believe—no more, no less;
That I am right (an no one else) confess.
Feel as I feel, think only as I think’
Eat what I eat, and drink but what I drink.
Look as I look, do always as I do;
And then—and only then—I’ll fellowship with you.**

Introduction

A. The Age Old Question Of A Christian Being “In The World But Not Of The World”

1. Arguments have been made over the centuries as to how a Christian is to live in this world.
 - a. The view of the **monastic**
 1. Withdraw and be separate
 2. Become a monk so that the world will not tempt me or affect me.
 3. Develop a “holy huddle”
 4. “After all, our world is a terrible place.”
 - b. The view of the **moderate**
 1. Don’t be different than the world: you need to blend in.
 2. Never, never cause anyone else any discomfort.
2. Arguments will continue to be made as to the place of Christians in this world, but I would rather **Jesus deal with that argument.**
 - a. That’s why I love the Sermon on the Mount.
 - b. Jesus begins His ministry by setting His twelve disciples down and setting them straight as to the TRUE nature of spirituality.
 1. And why did THEY have the wrong view as presented by the religious leaders?
 2. In my opinion, so does the majority of the evangelical church.

B. The Age Old Question of “Being In The World But Not Of The World” Was Dealt With By Jesus Some 2000 Years Ago.

1. How did we miss it?
2. And consider what our world would look like if we had understood Him.

I. The Christian As SALT - What We ARE In The World

Vs. 13a: “You are the salt of the earth.”

A. The DEFINITION of Salt

1. **Definition** in Jesus’ day
 - a. Unlike our salt which is found in salt domes and then processed into a fine pure grain.
 - b. Salt in Jesus’ day largely came from the Dead Sea.
 1. Taken up in clumps but was often mixed with dirt and gypsum
 2. The salt would be separated from the dirt when it was to be used.
 3. Salt was also purchased from traders who came into Israel.

2. **Usage** in Jesus’ day

- a. Salt was in great demand
 - 1. It was so **precious** that the **Roman**:
 - a. soldiers were often paid in salt - thus the saying, "A man is worth his salt."
 - b. said there was nothing more useful than sun and salt.
 - 2. Because of the lack of refrigeration, meat was thoroughly **rubbed** with salt so that the meat would be protected from decay.
 - 3. **Fishermen** immediately put their catch in salt before they took the fish to the market.
 - 4. Often **mothers** would even rub their newborn infants with salt for its medicinal help.
 - 5. People put their cooking **ovens** outside the house and cooked on tiles after salt was placed under the tiles to create more heat in the oven.
 - 6. And obviously, salt was used in the **cooking of food**. All cultures have depended on salt for that major reason.
- b. Jesus' audience fully understood the vital importance of salt.

B. The DUTY of Salt

- 1. Jesus **CALLS** us salt.
 - a. Notice that Jesus says that **we** - Christians - **are** the salt of the earth.
 - 1. He does not say, aspire to be the salt; work to be salt; fill up your life with salt.
 - 2. He says that we always **are** salt.
 - b. There are two points that need to be made.
 - 1. **Grammatically**
 - a. When a noun and the object of a sentence are connected with a being verb (to be); then the subject and the object of the sentence **ARE THE SAME THING!**
 - 1. Jesus is saying that you - Christians **ARE** the salt of the earth. You are one and the same.
 - 2. Chuck Swindoll says that we should say the same things that people at a basketball game say when an opponent misses a shot - You, You, You, You . . .
 - b. So, see how Jesus defines you -
 - 2. **Personally**
 - a. You are **ALREADY** salt; you don't need to get more salt; and become "saltier."
 - b. You have all the salt that you need - **WHETHER YOU ARE USING IT OR NOT!**

2. Jesus **EXPECTS** of us as salt.
 - a. **Salt preserves**
 1. In Jesus' day, the meat was rubbed with the salt to prevent it from decay.
 2. **FIRST** of all, Jesus is saying salt **ENGAGES** its culture, **IT DOES NOT RUN AWAY FROM IT. THAT'S WHY HE USED SALT AS A COMPARISON.**
 3. Christians, as salt, are supposed to live in this world to help prevent deterioration.
 - a. Only in the end times will the church be raptured so that the world will be left **WITHOUT** the influence of salt in this world.
 - b. Examples:
 1. **Jesus Himself** elevated the place of women as He ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well.
 2. Most **historians** agree that what saved England from a revolution as bloody as the French revolution was the timely ministry of the **EVANGELICAL** revival and other Christians.
 3. When **John Calvin** went to Geneva, Switzerland, he committed as much of his time to dealing with physical hospitals as he did with spiritual hospitals.
 4. **Christians have been involved** with the abolition of slavery, child labor, establishment of orphanages, and the reform of prison systems.
 4. R.V. Tasker says that disciples are to be a moral disinfectant in a world where moral standards are low, constantly changing, and non-existent.
 - a. And we must be doing a real lousy job.
 - b. This is a tremendously judgmental **STROKE** on the church: **John R. W. Stott: "Now Christians are set in secular society by God to hinder this process. God intends us to penetrate the world. Christian salt has no business to remain snugly in elegant little ecclesiastical salt cellars; our place is to be rubbed into the secular community, as salt is rubbed into meat, to stop it going bad. And when society does go bad, we Christians tend to throw up**

our hands in pious horror and reproach the non-Christian world; but should we not rather reproach ourselves? One can hardly blame unsalted meat for going bad. It cannot do anything else. The real question to ask is: where is the salt?"

5. Perhaps Jesus was referring to a group of people known as the Essenes.
 - a. They lived about a hundred miles to the south from where He was staying.
 - b. A community of Jews who withdrew from the world to remain pure.
 - c. But who ironically lived just a few miles from the depository of salt itself, The Dead Sea!

b. Salt flavors

1. Without a doubt, salt has always been used to flavor food.
 - a. Have you ever had potatoes without salt?
 - b. or soup without salt
2. I believe that Jesus is saying that Christians should have taste, flavor, even punch!
3. Oh, the reputation that we have as believers:
 - a. After Christianity had been recognized as an official religion of the Roman Empire, **Emperor Julian said, "Have you looked at these Christians closely? Hollow-eyed, pale-cheeked; they brood their lives away unspurred by ambition. The sun shines for them, but they don't see it. The earth offers them its fullness, but they desire it not. All their desire is to renounce and suffer that they may come to die.**
 - b. **Oliver Wendell Holmes** reportedly said once that he might have entered the ministry except that certain clergymen looked and acted so much like undertakers.
 - c. **Robert Louis Stevenson** once wrote in his diary: I had an extraordinary day; "I have been to church today, and am not depressed."
4. Oh, how can we NOT BE ENCOURAGED?
 - a. I believe that truly, committed Christians are wonderful to be around.
 1. They are so much THEMSELVES.
 - a. Secure with self
 - b. Filled with the love of Christ

2. Becky Pippert, author of Out of the Salt Shaker says that Christians are uncomfortable around non-believers, because THEY ARE SO UNCOMFORTABLE WITH THEMSELVES! **“Our problem in evangelism is not that we don’t have enough information - it is that we don’t know how to be ourselves.”**
 - b. Christians should be fun to be around
 1. Filled with the Spirit
 2. Directed by His Word
 3. Living in relationships and ministries to others
 4. Going to heaven
 5. Oh . . . yea . . .
- c. **Salt heals**
 1. Without a doubt, salt has been used for generations as medicinal
 2. We are to do the same
 3. Whether you like it or not, you are salt - AND SALT HEALS: THAT IS ONE OF ITS ESSENTIAL PROPERTIES
 4. And although you have the property to heal, most of your salt is being left in the salt shaker.
 5. Examples:
 - a. Getting involved with brokenness
 - b. College - listening to broken hearts
- d. **Salt replicates**
 1. Salt was seen in Jesus’ day as representing truth and integrity.
 - a. A man worth his salt earned a day’s wages
 - b. Salt was used to establish contracts
 - c. It meant that you would keep your word
 2. Salty people should represent and replicate Christ in our daily lives.
 - a. Woodrow Wilson told the story of being in a barbershop one time. **“I was sitting in a barber chair when I became aware that a powerful 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 to me I was aware 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 affect that his visit had brought upon the barber shop. They talked in undertones. They did not know his name, but they knew something had elevated their thoughts, and I felt that I left that place as I should have left a place of worship.**”

- b. It is said of **Robert Murray McCheyne**, a godly Scottish minister of the last century, that his face carried such a hallowed expression that **people were known to fall on their knees and accept Jesus Christ as Savior when they looked at him.** Others were so attracted by the self-giving beauty and holiness of his life that they found his Master irresistible.
- c. It was also said of the French pietist **Francois Fenelon** that his communion with God was such that his face shined with divine radiance. A religious skeptic who was compelled to spend the night in an inn with Fenelon, hurried away the next morning, saying, **“If I spend another night with that man I’ll be a Christian in spite of myself.”**
3. In fact, many think that the term “earth” represents your personal place on this earth.
 - a. An office
 - b. A home
 - c. An athletic team
 - d. A golf course
 - e. A neighborhood
- e. **Salt causes thirst.**
 1. Salt is seen as a silent ministry:
 - a. It is not so much what you say
 - b. but who you are
 2. When others are around you they should taste salt.
 - a. Not HAVING to hear, because they can see
 - b. Illustrations:
 1. Richard W.
 2. In some ways, the more time you are around someone, the less you talk and the more you live out your faith.
 3. Always using your salt to find a time to share.

B. The DEATH of Salt

Vs. 13b: **“But if 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.”**

1. The salt from the Dead Sea would be separated from the dirt and gypsum.
2. However, if this salt could not be separated from the dirt, it would be thrown out onto the road where it would become a part of the road.
 - a. Something that could be worthwhile
 - b. would become worthless, simply part of the street.
 - c. from where we get the phrase, “good for nothing.”
3. That’s what happens to Christians that become adulterated; contaminated
 - a. mixed with the world
 - b. so that it is neither dirt or salt.
 - c. even though you are still salt, Jesus can’t use you.
 1. Think of it; Jesus can’t use you BECAUSE you are so mixed up
 2. Even though He desires to do so.

II. The Christians As LIGHT - What We “DO” In The World

Vs. 14 - **“You are the light of the world.”**

A. The DEFINITION of light

1. We have a hard time with a lack of light because we live in a world of electricity
 - a. And we have NEVER known darkness
 - b. Except those who grew up way out in the country.
2. In Jesus’ day there was no electricity
 - a. The only light was that provided by oil in large lanterns
 - b. A typical home in Israel was small with one window 18 inches wide.
 1. A lamp made like a saucebowl, was filled with oil and a wick.
 2. The lamp provided light for the whole house
 3. Because they did not have matches, once a lamp was lit, it would not be put out -- but put under an earthen bushel to dim the light.

B. The DUTY of light

1. **Light shines in the darkness!**
 - a. It almost sounds stupid, but there would be no need for light if there were no darkness.
 1. Light PRESUPPOSES a darkness
 2. And light must go to THE DARKNESS TO BE EFFECTIVE!
 - b. As Jesus speaks to us of light, it should DESTROY our view of the Holy Huddle.
 1. **“What would you think of a football team that huddled all the time? Every time you tuned into a**

game, you never saw them get out of the huddle. You'd think, "Man can they huddle! Look at 'em holding hands, spurring each other on. . . firing each other up . . . but can they play? Can they score? A watching world sees us file into church buildings every Sunday. They notice that we huddle a lot . . . we hold hands and fire each other up, talk about highlight film-clips from the good old days, and create intricate new plays that we might run someday. They notice that we talk about the other team huddled down the street (you know the one who loves Jesus just as much as we do, but we just can't seem to get on the same page of the play book), they hear us argue about what the pep band is playing and which uniforms we ought to be wearing to the huddle. They hear us complain about how we don't have enough players, and can't help but notice how we spend most of our concentrated effort on upkeep of the stadium in which we huddle . . . and friends, while all that is going on, a hellbound, Christless world is watching and they're wondering . . . "Oh how they huddle . . . but can they play?"

2. Whereas salt is seen as silent, light is seen as **VISIBLE, TO BE SEEN!**

c. Why do you think that Jesus says -

1. A city on a hill **CANNOT** be hidden

- a. The word **CANNOT** is an emphatic word
- b. You can't help but see a city with all of its lights!

1. When you are in utter darkness outside the city, that light will give light to all!
2. My experience in Galilee

2. No one puts a light under a bushel

- a. **THE PURPOSE** of light **IS TO SHINE!**
- b. That is what light is for!

1. How many of us have had flashlights when the batteries went bad -
 - a. What a mess!
 - b. What a waste!
2. Some of you need:
 - a. To trim the wick - confession of sin - a clearer light
 - b. To fill your bowl - Holy Spirit

2. **So - let your light shine**

Vs. 16 - **"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."**

- a. The words
 - 1. **Light**
 - a. Emitted by a lamp
 - b. A star
 - 2. **Shine**
 - 3. **Before**
 - a. in front of
 - b. in the presence of
 - c. in the sight of
 - 4. **Men**
 - a. anthropos
 - b. human beings
 - c. all human individuals
 - 5. **See**
 - a. to perceive with the eyes
 - b. to discover
 - c. to turn the eyes
 - d. to pay attention
 - e. to inspect; examine
 - 6. **Good** (works)
 - a. beautiful
 - b. handsome
 - c. beautiful, by reason of purity of heart and life
- b. The meaning
 - 1. Shining our light before men is God's **METHOD**
 - a. We are called to shine before men.
 - 1. After all, we are called the light of the
WORLD!
 - 2. **We are not called the light of the church!**
 - b. We are called to shine by our good works because they cannot understand our good works
 - 1. They don't understand our theology
 - 2. but they can understand our love
 - a.

Earl Palmer, in a fine little book entitled *The Enormous Exception*, tells the story of a premed student at the University of California, Berkeley "who became a Christian after a long journey through doubts and questions." When Palmer asked the young man who he had chosen Jesus Christ, he answered that what had "tipped the scales" in his spiritual journey were **the actions of a classmate who happened to be a Christian. During the previous term the premed student had been very ill with the flu and, and as a result, had missed ten days of school. "Without any fanfare or complaints," his Christian classmate**

carefully collected all his class assignments and took time away from his own studies to help him catch up. The premed student told Palmer, “You know, this kind of thing just isn’t done. I wanted to know what made this guy act the way he did. I even found myself asking if I could go to church with him.”

2. Shining our light before men is **our WORSHIP**

a. Do you want to glorify God?

1. Is it a worship service?
2. Is it your personal devotions?
3. Is it ministry in the church?
4. Yes, all of those things glorify God, but are we having HUGE area of worship out - ministry to our fellow man.

b. **I have been greatly convicted about this message:**

1. There is NO DOUBT that Jesus’ words of salt and light MUST CONVINCe AND CONVICT US AGAINST a “monastic holy huddle”

a. **We are being disobedient to the call of Christ in our lives if we ONLY:**

1. Fellowship with other Christians
2. And minister only within the church walls

b. We must FULLY UNDERSTAND that Jesus uses salt and light in this way.

1. **Salt** - the **silent impact** made on the world by our being IN IT!
2. **Light** - the **visible impact** so that the world will see Jesus in us!

3. Not long ago I was

talking to a young lady who expressed her dissatisfaction with her living arrangements. She told me she wanted to move. I asked her why. “Well,” she said, “I’m the only Christian there.” “I still don’t understand why you want to move,” I replied. “Because I’m the only Christian there.” “I

still don't understand," I persisted. "It's such a dark place," she explained further. **"It would seem to me that the darker the place, the brighter the light that's needed," I answered.** Stuart Briscoe

2. Will we begin to - Swindoll says - "shake and shine."
 - a. These two illustrations should thoroughly convince us that our ministry is out there
 - b. We meet and worship in order to be salt and light in a dying and dark world.

I sometimes think how splendid it would be if non-Christians, curious to discover the secret and source of our light, were to come up and enquire:

**Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!**