

Sermon on the Mount - September 29, 2024

Shine Brightly

Matthew 5:13-16



The wonderful thing about the Sermon on the Mount is that Jesus is talking to the crowd in a comfortable, down-home way. The metaphors and examples used are obvious to the ordinary person. They are meant to be clear and easily understood. There are no secrets, no complicated philosophical language. These are practical words that are easily applied in everyday life—words and directions that are easy to remember.

Salt

Read Matthew 5:13.

Salt has always been critical to survival—the body needs it. The salt trade was a rich and thriving business in the Middle East in Jesus’ time. Roman salaries were paid with salt; in fact, the word salary comes from the root word for salt. Salt was valuable. Salt was money.

The Hebrews of this time used salt harvested from the Dead Sea. Because of the many impurities in that source, it was impure. Those impurities resulted in a quick degradation of the salt. It often lost its saltiness quickly and became tasteless and useless. This scenario was familiar for the people to whom Jesus was speaking.

The word used at the end of the verse for trampled is *katapateo*. In Greek it literally means trampled down. Figuratively it was used to indicate rejection with disdain.

- What do you do when something you possess loses its effectiveness—its value?
 - What makes a Christian salty?
 - As a Christian, what might be a sign that you have lost your saltiness?
 - What impact does the use of the words “trampled down” have on the idea of being a tasteless Christian?
 - Can you recover your “saltiness”? If so, how?
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Light

Read Matthew 5:14-16.

In a time without electricity, light was important. Homes had few windows because shade in the hot climate was valued. So light was needed both inside the house as well as outside after dark. Torches, candles, and lamps were a necessity.

Because of light's ability to reveal hidden things, it was a metaphor for knowledge and truth. Even then, shining a light had many subtle meanings. Remember also that the focus is not on the light, but on what it can reveal. We don't stare at the sun—we observe what the light from the sun reveals. If we are the light, the point is not to draw attention to ourselves, but to reveal God to others.

In this passage, the Greek word translated as "world" in verse 14 is *kosmos* in Greek, *cosmos* in English. Remember that at that time they did not think of the world as a planet. The word *kosmos* means the "orderly arrangement or decoration used to enhance one's surroundings." For the Jews, their "world" was God's creation, gloriously arranged for them to inhabit and enjoy. And they were charged as His chosen people to be a light to the world (Isaiah 42:6).

- Give an example of a Christian hiding their light.
- Why might a person hide themselves and/or their faith?
- What is your "bowl/basket"? How do you hide your light?
- How can you shine a light without attracting the attention to yourself?
- What is the key to using good deeds to shine a light on God?
- What are some ways you could increase the distance your light shines?

Living It

List one way you will shine your light this week.

Arrange with a growth group buddy to be accountable.

Share your story with the group next week.