

A Display of God's Glory

(Matthew 5:13–16) "13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

The context of today's text is the Beatitudes. The beatitudes describe the character and moral fiber of individual Christians increasingly impacted by Christ the King.

These four verses now change our focus. They describe our *corporate* life together. They describe a church in whom the beatitudes have increasingly penetrated the lives of its membership.

Main Idea: The church exists to display God's glory.

16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

This is our mission. However, it is a mission that is impossible to accomplish in human strength alone.

BILLBOARD

A. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE GLORY

13 "You are the salt of the earth" ... 14 "You are the light of the world." The "you" in both of these verses is plural. So, it could be translated "you all." In other words, as we have seen, today's text pivots from an emphasis on the individual to an emphasis on the church.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden."

The church is a City. Again, it is corporate. Cities have infrastructure for mutual care, i.e. garbage disposal, water, utilities, etc. A City also has a central government—laws, courts, prisons, etc. So does the church.

But the church is not any old city. It is the city of God. The Bible constantly contrasts God's City (Jerusalem) with the City of Man (Babylon). The church is

God's city, and it is situated in the midst of, or surrounded by, the cities of this world.

This location produces the persecution that we discussed last week.

What is our application? Displaying God's glory is a team sport. We do it together. We do it by and with committed relationships.

Commit yourself to a local church. We commit ourselves to local churches through the process of membership.

B. THE LOCATION OF THE GLORY

The city is on a hill or mountain. "*A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.*" The idea is elevation. The church is up where everyone can see it. (Mt. Spokane). The church elevated is a common biblical theme.

(Isaiah 2:2) "2 It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,"

It is important to note that Jesus is giving the Sermon on the Mount from an elevated place.

(Matthew 5:1) "1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him."

In the same way, Jesus went up a mountain to be transfigured.

(Matthew 17:1) "1 And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves."

Application: Glorifying God is important to God. He wants his glory displayed. He wants everyone to see it. The lifting up and exaltation of God's glory is a corporate project.

C. METAPHORS FOR THE GLORY; SALT & LIGHT

1. Salt

13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

Why the image of salt? Salt has many positive and useful qualities. First, it adds flavor. It was the most important way to flavor food in Jesus' day. Try to imagine a diet without salt? It is not pleasant.

Lewis and Clark.

Jesus' point is this. Just as salt flavors food, so the church adds moral flavor to the world.

In addition, salt is a preservative. It kills bacteria. Our ancestors used salt to preserve food, i.e. bacon, ham, sausage, salt-pork, soy-sauce, etc. The church is the salt of the world. Sin is present everywhere and, just as salt keeps meat from rotting, so the presence of the church prevents the complete moral putrefaction of the world around us.

So salt is a symbol of additional flavor. So, what flavor does the church produce that interests Jesus? How does the church salt that world? The context is the answer. To the degree that we live the beatitudes we add salt to the world. Salty churches are increasingly living out the beatitudes. Salty churches flavor the family, the government, the larger church, and our fallen culture with the aroma of Christ.

Lloyd-Jones: The Christian "is a check, a control, an antiseptic in society, preserving it from unspeakable foulness, preserving it, perhaps, from a return to a dark age."¹

It is important to note that God uses suffering to enhance our saltiness

(Mark 9:49–50) "49 For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

The metaphor of salt also contains a profound warning. Churches that have lost their saltiness will be cast out. They will be "trampled under people's feet." In the same way, to the church at Ephesus Jesus said,

"Repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent" (Revelation 2:5).

¹ Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies In the Sermon on the Mount*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959-60), pg. 137

2. Light

14a "You are the light of the world...16b let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

Light is one of the Bible's big themes. The bible begins and ends with light. "*Let there be light*" (Gen 1:3-4).

(Revelation 22:5) "And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever."

a) LIGHT TWISTED BY THE WORLD

It is important to note that the modern world thinks of itself as light, when in fact it is really in thick darkness. For example, secular historians have labeled the medieval period, the period of "Christendom" the dark ages. By contrast, they have labeled the 18th century revival of paganism the "enlightenment." (Other labels for the enlightenment are modernism). The main quality of enlightenment modernism is *skepticism*, skepticism about the existence of a spiritual realm, skepticism about any inherited or revealed authority, especially the Bible. This is not what Jesus had in mind when he said "you are the light of the world." In fact, the enlightenment is a demonic counterfeit of God's light.²

b) LIGHT IN THE BIBLE

Amongst other things, light represents relationship with God the Father.

(John 1:4–5) "4 In [Jesus] was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Jesus' life, i.e. his relationship with the Father, is spiritual "Light." The Bible tells us that "God is Light" (1 Jn. 1:5), that he dwells in "unapproachable light" (1 Tim 6:16). That is because the members of the Trinity relate to each other with perfect holiness. To be converted means to see their relational light and begin to fellowship with it.

Light also represents God's holiness or moral glory.

Note: We do not see this light with our physical eyes. We see it with the eyes of our hearts. In other words, it is a verbal light. We see God's light by hearing the gospel. It is a conceptual light. It is God's Truth. Faith in that Truth produces

² Light in Nature: Physical light is a symbol of God's light. It has many wonderful properties.

relationship with God. That relationship is life. In other words, God's light is relational.

c) *THE LIGHT OF MATT. 5*

A real relationship with God will always produce holiness. That is the idea latent in today's text.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden... Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

That is why the NT writers compare godly living to living in spiritual light.

(1 John 1:5-7) "5 God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin."

How do we get more of this light? The more we gaze upon the light of Christ the more we reflect that light.

(2 Corinthians 3:18) "18 And we all... beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit."

Anecdote: A phosphorescent watch.

In the same way, Moses face shown when he came down from the mountain.

God's light is on a rheostat. It gets brighter and brighter as we grow.

"But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day" (Proverbs 4:18).

d) *LIGHT AS EVANGELISM*

It is our job to help unbelievers see God's light. "*Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your father who is in heaven.*"

The problem with unbelievers is that they are blind. They cannot detect God's light. This should not surprise us. In the physical realm also, some forms of light cannot be detected by the human eye. For example, infrared light is all about us but we cannot see it or detect it with our physical eyes.

In the same way, God's light is all about us, and unless God opens the eyes of our hearts, we cannot detect it either. When we do, everything changes. Our relationship with God changes, and so does our relationship with everything around us. That is how Paul describes conversion. God opens our eyes to his light and everything changes.

(2 Corinthians 4:6) "6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (PP Matt. 4:16)

We also see everything by God's Light.

C.S. Lewis: "'I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it [the sun] but because by it [the sun] I see everything else.'"³

God sent Paul to the Gentiles, *"to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me"* (Acts 26:18).

In summary, what is the moral quality that salt and light point to? Practically, what does the light of God look like? The answer is in the context. The beatitudes precede this passage. They give us a snapshot of what a salty, light-emitting church looks like. In other words, the beatitudes describe the growing fruit that accrues to someone who is in a relationship with God the Father. A congregation increasingly living out the beatitudes is a light-emitting church .

Summarize—

Here is the burden of this text. The church exists to display God's glory. Light is a synonym for God's glory.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden... 16 Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

The text indicates that God is glorified through our good works. Salt and light are synonyms for good works.

³ McGrath, Alister (2013-02-18). C. S. Lewis – A Life: Eccentric Genius, Reluctant Prophet (pp. 225-226). Tyndale House Publishers. Kindle Edition.

1 Peter 2:9 makes the same point.

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

D. APPLICATION

God wants his light to impact our fallen world. Where are we most frequently in contact with the world? Four places. First in our secular work. Second, if our kids attend public school, at the schools. Third, in our extended families. And fourth, in our work with the Logan neighborhood.

So, what would salt and light look like in a fallen world?

- Salt & light submits to lawful authority.
- Salt & light trains children to be humble, respectful, courteous, obedient, and self-confident.
- Salt & light means husbands loving their wives sacrificially. (Little things: Open the car door, put up with abuse, give her the remote, try to put yourself in her shoes).
- Salt & light motivates wives to support, encourage, and submit to their husbands.
- Salt & light reconciles relationships...
- Salt & light "rejoices always," and approaches "everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" (Phil 4). It hates self-pity.
- Salt & Light perseveres through persecution.
- Salt & light is "poor in spirit," "Mourns" for sin, and cultivates "meekness."
- Salt & light hungers and thirst for righteousness, is pure in heart, and cultivates peace with all men.
- Salty Christians manage their money for the glory of God.

Let's close with two questions.

1st How do we grow increasingly salty? How do we become light to a world bound in darkness? Remember John chapter one? "*In him was life, and his life was the light of men.*" Jesus relationship with the Father was life, and that life was his spiritual light.

Here is the equation—*relationship with the Father through the atoning work of Jesus Christ is where we plug in to amplify our spiritual light*. The more we cultivate that relationship the more salty we will get, and the more light we will exude.

So, here is how we amplify our light. The more we put ourselves in the presence of God's light the more we will reflect God's light. Remember the phosphorescent watch example?

(2 Corinthians 3:18) "18 And we all... beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another."

The more we *behold* the glory, the more we will *display* the glory. How do we behold the glory of God? We behold the glory of God by practicing the spiritual disciplines—prayer, Bible study, meditation, church attendance, homegroup attendance, etc. Desire should fuel the spiritual disciplines. The more you practice the spiritual disciplines the greater your desire will grow.

David Wells, "Knowing God fills us with a hunger for more of what we already know."⁴

Anecdote: My dinner habits...

Here is how Jesus said it.

"Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you. For to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."(Mark 4:24–25)

2nd What does the glory of God look like? It is Christ hanging on a cross.

Jesus glorified God by himself, isolated and rejected by both God and man. He did this so that we could glorify him as a City.

Jesus glorified God by being lifted up on a cross. He did this so that we could glorify him as a city on a hill.

⁴ Wells, David F. (2014-01-31). God in the Whirlwind: How the Holy-love of God Reorients Our World (Kindle Location 237). Crossway. Kindle Edition.

Jesus didn't put his light under a bushel basket. He let his light shine in the open, so that we could see his good works and glorify his Father who is in heaven

Through his death Jesus showed us what salt looks like. By his willingness to die Jesus showed us what the light of life, true relationship with the Father looks like.

His Father raised him from the dead to confirm that he was "the salt of the earth, the light of the world."

Someday Matthew 5:13-16 will find fulfillment. That is why the Bible ends with the city of God coming down from heaven onto God's mountain reflecting the glory of God's light.

(Revelation 21:10) "10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare Jewel."