

# Matthew 5:13–16 “You Are the Salt of the Earth & Light of the World” 2-9-2020

## St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, New Ulm, MN

### Matthew 3:13-16

<sup>13</sup>“You are the salt of the earth. But if the 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 underfoot. <sup>14</sup>“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

### Introduction

“I am.....” Speaking from your circumstances in life, how would you complete this statement? In respect to gender maybe you would say, “I am male.” Or, “I am female.” You might relate to vocation – “I am a farmer” or “I am a worker at 3-M.” You might reflect on your emotional state – “I am happy.” Or, you might reflect on something entirely different.

Today God gives you something very important to add to the list of things you could use to complete the statement, “I am...” In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, **“You Are The Salt Of The Earth.... You Are The Light Of The World.”** Let’s think about this.

### 1. Appreciate What God Made You to Be

We think about salt and light. Salt is sodium chloride – 60% chlorine and 40% sodium. **Salt** is one of the wonders of God’s creation. We find it in the oceans, lakes, streams, swamps, the air around us and in veins or layers of salt within the earth. **Light** is radiant energy. It is the result of electrons of a nucleus becoming excited by external stimuli and as a result producing the radiant energy that we perceive as light.

In Jesus’ eyes every Christian is salt. Every Christian is light.

But this wouldn’t be the case if the Triune God had not salted and enlightened us. When we came into the world sin was rotting away in our soul and had made us spiritually dead and dark. We couldn’t love God. We weren’t in fellowship with God. Our souls were dark and dismal destined to hell.

But God salted us. Our Savior fulfilled God’s commands and suffered God’s curse on Calvary. In so doing, Jesus produced forgiveness. He purchased peace with God and a place in God’s family. Jesus is the Salt Brine of Salvation. At our conversion the Holy Spirit, working through the Gospel in word and sacrament, soaked us in the salt brine of Jesus. He gave us Jesus’ holiness and forgiveness. He made us children of God. He “salted” us.

The Bible also calls Jesus the Light of the World. At the same time the Holy Spirit salted us, he enlightened us with Jesus, the Light of the World. He caused the love of God to shine brightly in our souls, giving us life. Through faith in Jesus the Spirit of God salted us and enlightened our souls so we could see Jesus as our Savior.

Appreciate what God has done for you. He has made you the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

### 2. Losing Your Saltiness and Covering Your Light

Now the Lord wants you to carry out your role as the salt of the earth and the light of the world – not losing your saltiness or hiding your light.

**Salt** has a variety uses, doesn't it? When your French fries are blah, you shake a little salt on them to give them some pizzazz. Salt is good for seasoning. Salt is a preservative. Salt is used in manufacturing, in agriculture, and in the medical world. Did you know that salt was once used in the place of money?

**Light** is essential for life in this world. If it weren't for light from the sun our earth would be a cold, dark place probably not able to support human life. Light is vital to the plant world on which we and other creatures depend for life. Through the process of photosynthesis plants absorb the radiant energy from the sun and convert it into storable, usable energy essential for plant life. People need light for their health and well-being.

When Jesus talks about being the salt of the earth and the light of the world there are two things he has in mind for Christians. First, just as salt has a preservative effect on things, Jesus wants the attitudes, actions and words of Christians to be good and godly so that we have a preservative effect on the society in which we live. The good things Christians do in response to God's love set an example for others around us.

When unbelievers see our good works, even though they may not like them at first, after a while they may see the good that comes out of them and decide that these things aren't so bad after all. Or, our good works may prick their conscience leading them to think that they better do things the right way to keep peace with us or even to save their own consciences. As a result, we have a salting or preservative effect on those around us. We serve as a moral preservative on the society of which we are a part.

At times we may lament the moral decay that has taken place in our country over the years. But have you thought about how things would be if it weren't for the influence of Christians voting in elections and referenda, being involved in establishing government policy, and setting an example for others in society? How bad would things be if it weren't for Christian influence? ..... God wants us to serve as salt in society.

God also want us to be light in that our attitudes, words, and actions are so good that when people see them, they wonder what makes us tick and want to have some of whatever it is that does it. As a result they began to look to God and his word for truth and answers to life's questions. Think about how lights are used in dramatic productions or live entertainment. A spotlight can direct our attention to a certain spot or to a person. When the focus of the spotlight changes, we redirect our attention to that spot or person. When Jesus calls us the light of the world, he wants us to realize that we are to be spotlights that direct people to the God whose love has made us alive and well in Christ.

How salty are we? How brightly do we shine? The devil doesn't want us to be salty and doesn't want us to shine. He works against us. As much as possible, this is something to avoid.

Jesus talks about this matter. <sup>13</sup>**"You are the salt of the earth. But if the 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 underfoot.** <sup>14</sup>**"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.** <sup>15</sup>**Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.** Pure salt does not lose its saltiness. But if it has enough impurities it is not very salty and therefore isn't worth much except to be thrown out. Likewise, when Christians become polluted by worldliness we may lose our saltiness. Worse, we may even lose our faith. Then should we die or should Jesus comes before we die and we have no faith, we will be outside the kingdom of God. The same thing is true if our light does not shine. And sometimes we Christians have faith, but then hide it because we don't want to "make waves" with those around.

While salt may not be able to regain saltiness, we Christians can regain our spiritual saltiness. We do that as we turn from the worldliness that is polluting our souls and turn to Jesus for forgiveness and strength. In Jesus we find that forgiveness as we were reassured in today's absolution and will be reassured of in today's

celebration of the Lord's Supper. In Jesus' love we receive strength to shine brightly and to be salty in our lives. So stay close to Jesus. You need to in order to be salty and shine.

### **3. Be What God Has Made You**

And God wants you to be salty and to shine. As you make decisions about how to manage the money God has given you, while others try to get everything that might be nice to have, live within your means. Take the approach that godliness with contentment is great gain. You will be salt and light.

As our society sees sex is something that two consenting adults have whenever and wherever they want, follow God's guidance that sex is a precious gift that God has given for a husband and wife – one man and one woman - to enjoy within the bounds of marriage. Be salt and light by being chaste and decent with spouses loving one another.

As people around you gossip and talk disrespectfully, or use God's name improperly, be salt and light by not joining in the trashing of God's name or someone's reputation. In stead speak well of and defend those being attacked.

Parents as others put the premium of parenting in seeing that their child be the best hockey or baseball player, or do everything to give their children an advantage in academics or the arts, don't neglect the academic, artistic and athletic development of your children, but put the premium on their relationship with God. Do this in sharing and discussing God's words and ways with your children. Do this as your show the importance of God and his word in your lives as you take time for worship and God's word and walk in his ways. You will be salt and light. And as we do we will have a powerful effect on the society in which we live.

A while back I read a true story about mission work done in mainland China when it was open to Christian mission efforts. One day a man showed up at the gate of a mission compound wanting to talk to the missionaries. This man said that he wanted to become a part of the Christian congregation. None of the missionaries there could remember seeing the man at services or Bible study groups. So, they asked, "Why would you want to take the big step of joining our congregation when you haven't even heard what we preach and teach." The man replied, "No I haven't heard your message. But I have seen it in the lives of the people from your group who have heard and believe you message. Their lives have proclaimed your message and I want to have what they have so I can be like they are."

Letting one's Christian light shine directs people's attention to the love of God in Jesus revealed in the gospel. As they seek to know and have God's love in Jesus, God is glorified. And by God's grace, these folks join us as salt and light in the Lord. So be salty and shine. .... Amen. (DRS)