

Permeating Influence in Pagan Society

Matthew 5:13-16

Sermon on the Mount addresses how God wants his people to live in the world today.
In light of confusion about how Christ's words relate to our doctrine & to the church, we want to consider what those words say to us.

Matthew attempts to resolve problem of their frustrated expectation:

What happened to God's plan?

He writes following death of Christ

Messianic expectation has been high.

Two major themes:

1. Jesus is the promised Messiah

2. What happened to God's plan?

As crowds follow Jesus, they listen to His words.

Logical question: If King's come & kingdom's about to begin, will we participate?

Rich young ruler expresses their thought:

"What more do I lack?"

What are requirements to enter the kingdom?

Jesus takes **His followers** up the mountain to talk to them.

Jesus gives **followers** answers from various perspectives

Summary: 5:20 *"...unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes & Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."*

Description of people who are accepted 5:1-16

Beatitudes describe kind of people who will participate in kingdom

–**NOT** prerequisites to enter!

People who are blessed/content are identified this way.

It's not those who follow traditional rituals & put on religious show who are satisfied & who enter the kingdom.

Personal contentment and entrance to kingdom flow out of internal, godly character.

Notice their description: It's the opposite of those people would expect to make it!

³*"Blessed are the **poor** in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

"Beggars"—know they have nothing to offer God.

It's not "the rich" who think they have it made!

Aware of their need—come pleading to God for help.

⁴*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they'll be comforted.*

Confess sin with sorrow.

*Not content with *status quo*—the way things are.*

⁵*"Blessed are the meek, for they'll inherit the earth.*

Genuine humility and concern for others.

⁶*"Blessed are those who hunger & thirst for righteousness, for they'll be filled.*

⁷*"Blessed are the merciful, for they'll be shown mercy.*

Those who show mercy, receive mercy

–warning to Pharisees!

⁸*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they’ll see God.*

⁹*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they’ll be called sons of God.*

¹⁰*“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

¹¹*“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you & falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me*

¹²*Rejoice & be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

People who are content with present conditions in the world now won’t be content in the coming kingdom.

In contrast, those who suffer & weep for sake of righteousness can be sure there’ll be just recompense

They will experience God’s blessing in the kingdom.

People who live this way experience peace & contentment!

OUR PERMEATING INFLUENCE 13-16

Followers of Jesus, who enter God’s kingdom, have a permeating influence for God where He places us.

5:13 *“You’re the salt of the earth, but if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It’s no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out & trampled by men.”*

How are we suppose to be like salt?

What’s that image mean?

We’re to be like salt—3 things salt’s good for:

1) Salt’s good for preserving what’s decaying –preventing spoiling

Swindoll: Ever smell old, rotten meat? Forgotten something you put in the refrigerator? An odor accompanies decay like nothing else. To keep meat, you have to preserve it. Salt was used for that purpose.

We should be preservative against decay of our society

2) Salt’s good for creating thirst.

Salt creates thirst so body retains proper amount of fluid to maintain health. Salt creates thirst which maintains life.

Our transformed lives should create a thirst for God

3) Salt’s good for flavoring other foods.

Most common biblical use--

Job 6:6 *“Is tasteless food eaten without salt, or is there flavor in the white of an egg?”*

Col 4:6 *“Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”*

Salt is good for nothing--if it becomes **tasteless**

Saltless salt is worthless as sand.

Stott—strictly speaking, *salt* can't lose its saltiness... sodium chloride is stable—resistant to attack. Nevertheless, it can become contaminated by mixture with impurities; then it becomes useless. Desalted salt is unfit even for the compost heap... what was then called "salt" was a white powder *containing* sodium chloride, that also contained much else, since there were no refineries. Sodium chloride is most soluble component & easily washes out. White powder still looked like salt, & was still called salt, but it neither tastes nor acts like salt. It's road dust!

Guatemala's sticky, flavorless salt—Put on more & more, but get nothing!

Like salt, our transformed life creates thirst for God.

Like light, we reveal God's nature in midst of darkness

5:14-16 *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill can't be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp & put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, & it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds & praise your Father in heaven."*

Little boy forgot lines in church play. His mom was in front row. She formed the words with her lips, but it didn't help; his memory was blank. Finally she leaned forward and whispered, *"I am the light of the world."* The child beamed with feeling: "My mother is the light of the world."

There's truth to that!—we reveal God's nature in midst of darkness.

We're light in derived sense, e.g., moon receives light from the sun.

Jesus' words tell us **2 things light is good for:**

1) Light's good to create visibility—Makes US visible to others

—City on hill—intended to be seen.

We're NOT to light like definition of flashlight: "cylindrical case used to carry dead batteries!"

Stott—"We shine... in the world like stars in the night sky. I sometimes think how splendid it would be if non-Christians, serious to discover secret... of our light were to enquire:

"Twinkle, twinkle, little star,

How I wonder what you are!"

2) Light's good for improving sight—

Helps us see where we're going.

What's around us for giving direction

=> the lamp on its stand

No one would be foolish enough to light such a lamp and then cover it. Any sensible person would set the lamp on a lampstand. The lamp on the stand gives light to everyone inside.

Poor people Jesus is addressing, had one-room houses.

Visibility was a main function—that's why we're here!

Christ is the light—we're reflectors of His light which is in us.

When we have tendency to cover that we're Christian, to make friends or avoid persecution, we should consider foolishness of lighting a candle and then covering it.

Billy Sunday: Christian got job in lumber camp. Friend said, "If those lumberjacks find out you're a Christian, you'll be in for a hard time!" After year, he came back to visit. He met the friend who predicted persecution from lumber-jacks. "How did it go?" asked the friend. "Did

they give you a hard time because you're a Christian?" "Oh, no. They didn't give me any trouble—they never even found out!"

God's two purposes for his people:

We're to be different

Salt shouldn't lose its distinctive flavor

Light shouldn't be hidden

Tasker—"Salt's different from medium we put it in.

Stott—"greatest tragedy of the church: its tendency to conform to prevailing culture instead of developing Christian counter- culture."

Frightening tendency (George Gallup): little difference between Christians, and the world.

Young policeman: "I've been thinking about my life and how much I've 'come out' for Christ in my daily conduct. If being a Christian were a crime, would there be enough evidence to convict me?"

Those who live content & enter kingdom show who we are by penetrating influence in the world! Do we?

Are we creating thirst for God by our distinctive lifestyle?

Are we revealing God's light nature in a dark world?

Does our presence make a difference?

Our calling has never been to remove darkness,
but to be light in dark

How is our influence in our community?

Do we make a difference?

How could we be more effective in making difference?