

Sermon - Sunday 19th April 2020

Title - Salt and Light

Reading - Matthew 5: 1-16

WELCOME

Thank you for joining us this the Lord's day - I hope you all are remaining well.

Let us pray: - Dear Lord and Heavenly Father, I thank you that we can have this time together around your word. I pray that the words of my mouth will be the words you would have me say. I also pray that the ears of the hearer will be opened and that the Holy Spirit will encourage us to accept your word and give us power to live by them day by day. I ask this in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

INTRODUCTION

When I last brought God's word, we looked in detail at The Beatitudes as recalled in Matthew's Gospel chapter 5, which is commonly known as the 'Sermon on the Mount'.

The sermon was directed to the disciples although many people crowded to hear what Jesus had to say.

If I was at MMTC we could breakdown the Sermon on the Mount as verses 1-12 - the Beatitudes - as the **reading**, verses 13-16 about salt and light as the **introduction** and then the rest of chapter 5 as the **preaching**.

We have already looked at the Beatitudes in detail. Jesus is giving us a summary of the Manifesto for the Kingdom of God. The various items in the Beatitudes are there for us while here on earth and walking the Christian path.

What we must **not** do is think that the Beatitudes are legalistic, it is completely opposite to that which the Scribes and the Pharisees attempted. They are not a set of rules which can be obeyed by anybody, under any circumstances, by the exercise of the human will. They are a heart condition. Jesus is teaching that purity of heart is what matters. Verse 8 says that, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God'.

Effectively, this is the reality of discipleship lived in the presence and power of the Kingdom of God but in the present world.

The first necessity of obedience for us is submission to the King. His kingdom knows no bounds and we must remember that the Kingdom is God's rule not just a place.

The beatitudes lead to persecution; verses 10-11 are quite clear. 2 Tim 3:12 - 'In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...'

In the Christian life there is an expectation of how to behave. Not a 'holier than thou' attitude - that would be the Pharisees' attitude. We are to be ...

You are the SALT of the Earth

Jesus said, (v13)

"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.

Notice the metaphor - 'You **are** the Salt of the earth' - and that we should take steps not to lose that saltiness.

A university lecturer asked his students to list as many different uses for salt ... when they had finished he had a list of 41 different uses. You will be relieved to hear that I won't be listing them this morning.

There are so many uses for salt some good, some bad.

Who remembers the bags of crisps in which you had to search for the small twist of blue paper that contained the salt? The crisps were pretty rank without it. Who would consider having fish and chips without the salt? The salt, being different to what it is put in or on, brings out the flavour.

Another vital use of salt is that of a preservative. It is added to arrest decay. You can get tins of tuna in brine, which is salt water. Meat in a bygone era would be covered in salt to keep it from going rotten. In our daily lives we can prevent degeneration - by our witness. The way we behave will have a positive effect.

Salt can also be used as an antiseptic - a moral disinfectant in a fallen world where the moral standards are low. In an open wound salt is a good antiseptic but it is painful. The Gospel is offensive and divisive to those who don't know our God and His Kingdom, or those who reject it.

Salt has value. In days gone by it was, in China particularly, second only to Gold. The local town of Droitwich for centuries has been a centre for salt and thrived on the trade.

However, salt mixed with the wrong things can make a bad substance. Salt mixed with water can become corrosive. When visiting Australia, I wondered why my son's DVD player was all tarnished - I was told the sea air - salt mixed with the wrong thing had oxidised the shiny surface.

Salt does not lose its saltiness unless it is contaminated with other substances. The Dead Sea is overwhelmingly salty. However it is mixed with a substance called gypsum which is used to make Plaster of Paris. The salt tastes flat and is basically used for throwing on pathways to keep the weeds down. And this is the picture that Jesus paints at the end of verse 13.

Losing saltiness can for a Christian be a major setback. If we become as the world or of the world, rather than apart from it, what happens to our witness?

To be 'salt of the earth' we must, [PAUSE] **must** have taken the beatitudes to heart - remember these are the character traits of a Christian. Can we be salt of the earth if we are not exemplifying the beatitudes?

Jesus is clear, if we lose our saltiness we are no good to Him. We won't lose our salvation but we are not making the difference

We are the church in the world, believers in society - more so now than ever before. Liberal Christianity is completely disconnected from the gospel - of Christ and Him crucified. And this what we are called to preach and witness about.

People don't like being told that something is wrong with them - that is that they are sinful and will go to hell. Our saltiness is their only hope.

We must be a peculiar people, distinctive - 'salt of the earth' - a general characteristic which is essentially, being different.

You are the Light of the World

Jesus goes on to say in verse 14

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

When I used to drive over from Ipswich to Birmingham on a wet Friday night in winter, you pass Corley services, go up the hill and as you come over the brow of the hill in the distance you see Birmingham, brightly lit, a most welcome sight knowing that your journey is almost at its end.

What should we be doing in light of these words - as Christians? We know that the Christian life will be hard because the Bible tells us - Matthew 24:9. Jesus says, "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. However, as Christians, we have the Holy Spirit and we have that hope that is steadfast and sure. 1 Peter 5:10 states,

'And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.'

Jesus said '**I am the light of the world**' - John 8:12.

So how must our light be in response to Peter's words in 1 Peter 2:9?

'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.'

I have 4 points to help us focus.

Our light must be **Regenerated**. We have no light of our own only what Jesus gives us. The second half of John 8:12 Jesus continues...

'Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'

Our light must be **Reflected**. Like the moon that has no light of its own it reflects the light of the sun. Light could be described as the essence of God. 'God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all.' (1 John 1:5). '...God lives in unapproachable light...' - 1 Timothy 6:16. Jesus is God and therefore 'the Light of the World.' We have no light of our own and we have been taken out of darkness, so we must reflect that light.

Our light must be **Recognisable**. If you had been on a warship during the second world war there was a device called a light semaphore. An operator would flash the light in morse code and the receiving ship would then receive the message. You have to be trained to send and receive morse

code - if you're no good at it the message would most likely be gibberish.

2 Timothy 2:15 tells us ...

'Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.'

Our light must be **Responsible**. We have a duty to share the gospel. Our light maybe rejected by the world BUT it is still visible. Paul writes to the Corinthians in his second letter, chapter 4 verse 4...

'The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.'

Paul goes on to say in v6 ...

'For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.'

We are the light of the world from the pre-eminent, matchless light of the world. We must be conspicuous, in a good position, not hidden. What is the point of a light hidden? There is a clear expectation for people to see by our light and that shines to the path of salvation.

Salt and light are linked - we need to be salt so that the light of the gospel can shine out.

R. Tasker states in his commentary on Matthew

'So the disciples must not hide themselves, but live and work in places where their influence maybe felt and the light that is in them be most fully manifested to others-not for their own glorification, but that others may see that the light of real Christian goodness, finding expression in a practical acts of loving-kindness and service, is a light not of this world but coming from God, and may in consequence be led to give honour and praise to its Giver.'

Therefore, Christians, followers of Christ, I urge you, along with myself, to examine yourself, to search you heart and come to a clear conclusion. Are you SALT and LIGHT?

The Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's diagnosis of humankind. Something is seriously wrong with the world - it's not climate change, global warming or the ongoing pandemic - **IT IS SIN.**

The WORLD is in decay and darkness - we are SALT and LIGHT.

But what if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour? Then now is the time to make a decision, to make a choice. You cannot sit on the fence, you are either for Him or you are against Him. You are in the light or in the dark, there is no twilight!

His light is shining now in the World through his disciples - like a moth drawn to the light - are you drawn to Christ? He and only He can bring you out of darkness into His marvellous light - all He requires is a humbled, contrite heart. We can offer nothing - He offers every thing - His Grace is sufficient for all.

Talk to Him today, ask for forgiveness, your life will never be the same. Then one day we will be in that perfect light - we will see Him face to face.

Amen.