

The Difference Makers

Matthew 5

Matthew 5:13-16; June 29, 2014

DAY ONE: Salt of the earth: adding "taste" and "flavor"

1. On the heels of the beatitudes, Jesus gives us these verses...

Matthew 5:13 "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 by men."

2. The beatitudes stressed one main thing: other-centered living: living for God and His kingdom. It is seen in our behavior and how we relate to people.

3. Jesus tells us we *are* the salt of the earth. What do you think He means?

4. Salt acts as a seasoning. Salt adds flavor. It makes food taste better. Salt also makes one thirsty. Christians being salt helps make truth more palatable to non-Christians. Your life should make others thirsty for why your life is different. Jesus attracted lost people. They liked being around Him. He made them thirsty for what He alone could give them.

How does these purposes of salt add to your understanding of what He calls us to do?

5. In the following examples jot down what you think you could do to add "salt."

a. Work room environment. "Everyone" is complaining about something at work.

b. Your wife mentions that the two of you haven't been out on a simple date in six weeks.

c. It's Sunday after worship. You walk out into the foyer and see a new person who looks lost. They're lingering around. No one is talking to them yet.

6. These are simple examples, but Jesus Christ sees something you can do to live for Him and His kingdom.

7. In these three examples, people are "dying." The "life" people are supposed to enjoy is languishing "without taste," without "life."

8. Can you see step into these roles? Ask God to make you alert to "salt" opportunities!

DAY 2: Salt of the earth: stopping decay, preserving something important

Matthew 5:13 "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 by men."

1. Yesterday we looked at salt's main usage today: adding flavor and taste to lifeless and tasteless food.

2. Today we look at an old usage for salt: a preservative. In the "olden days" (for centuries), people kept meat preserved by immersing it in salt! Ships that took six weeks to sail the Atlantic Ocean, or ships that circumnavigated the globe(!) kept meat fresh by the use of salt! In Jesus' day, this would have been a prominent usage.

3. Taking salt as a preservative, what comes to your mind about being the "salt of the earth?"

4. Yesterday we saw that salt added taste. Today, salt takes on a more serious usage: stopping the process of decay!

5. Below are some examples of things undergoing decay. Jot down the things you think you could do to stop decay.

a. Young adult single women show up at the local Birth Choice clinic wondering if they should keep their baby.

b. You've heard that many teens stop opening up to their parents, but they will open up to another adult who demonstrates that they care about the teen.

c. Your neighbor just told you that his wife is filing for divorce.

Col. 4:4-6 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. [5] Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. [6] Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

6. To what does "salt" refer to in these verses?

7. How would you incorporate this verse if you were involved with someone in question 5?

8. Is there something or someone with whom you sense the need to be involved? Spend a few minutes asking God to open doors for your involvement as being salt.

DAY 3: Light for a dark world

Matthew 5:14a "You are the light of the world...."

1. Jesus now uses a second metaphor to illustrate the role we're to play with people: light!

2. What do you think Jesus means by this?

3. To understand the need to be "a light of the world," we should consider "the *plight* of the world." It is darkness. Underneath the following verses, jot down why there is a need for light.

*Psalm 82:5 They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in **darkness**; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.*

*Prov. 4:19 But the way of the wicked is like deep **darkness**; they do not know what makes them stumble.*

*Isaiah 42:7 ... to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in **darkness**.*

3. "Light" is often a metaphor for God's truth. How would God's truth about (a) God, (b) Mankind, (c) Jesus Christ, and (d) Sin, foolishness, stumbling, addiction, etc. be of help in the following verses?

*Psalm 82:5 They know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in **darkness**; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.*

*Prov. 4:19 But the way of the wicked is like deep **darkness**; they do not know what makes them stumble.*

*Isaiah 42:7 ... to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in **darkness**.*

4. Jesus identifies Himself as the light of the world...

John 8:12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

5. What promises does He make to those who follow Him?

DAY 4: Limiting our light?

Matt. 5:14 A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

1. If you try to be the light of the world, you will often find yourself wondering just how much influence you really have. It often seems as if our efforts are miniscule.

2. Here, Jesus uses an illustration that should be an encouragement to us.

3. Is it possible to hide a city when it sits on a hill?

4. On a scale of 1-100, just how rhetorical is question #3?

5. What point is Jesus making in Matt. 5:14, above?

6. Now Jesus uses another hyperbole to illustrate the same idea.

Matthew 5:15 "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."

7. Have you ever lit a light in your home, and then suddenly hid the light under a box?

8. What is the point Jesus is making? How can that be an encouragement to you when your efforts to be light *seem* so small?

9. Place a check next to the ways you might "hide" your light:

Not take the initiative to serve Not take the initiative to express gratitude

Not do something kind for someone who's discouraged.

Not ask someone how you can pray for them. Not tell people that you are a Christian.

Not take time to find out how someone near you is doing.

10. Hiding our light comes down to being passive with our faith, not really caring about people, choosing the path of least resistance, or being afraid of rejection.

11. What's keeping you from shining the light God has given you?

DAY 5: How people see the light

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

1. Jesus connects the dots on you being light. What does He tell us to do?
2. Jesus equates letting your light shine with visible "good deeds." What strikes you about that?
3. This should not be surprising. Following Christ is not a solo affair in order to feel better about yourself. If you are following Christ you are moving into the lives of people around you. In the following verses, jot down how good deeds and actions are important.

James 2:15 Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food.

¹⁶ *If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?*

¹⁷ *In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*

1 Peter 2:12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Matthew 25:34 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

³⁵ *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,*

³⁶ *I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."*

4. Jesus gave us two pictures of making a difference in our world--being salt and light.
5. Jesus compels you to engage with His kingdom and the people around you. He even promises that your light will shine IF you engage in good deeds where others can see the Jesus inside you.
6. What can you do to be salt and light?