

Mt.5:13¶ "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.16"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Jesus has come to establish and eventually consummate His kingdom. Until the time of His return to consummate the kingdom, we as his disciples have been given teaching by our Savior on the norms of the Christian life as members of the kingdom, in the beatitudes, the first part of the Sermon on the Mount.

We have been taught about the progression that must be evident in the life of a true believer and disciple of Christ and the ongoing maturity that must be evidenced in some degree. If these things are not evident, then there is no true conversion or hope to be a member of the eternal kingdom of God as a son of God. In the next part of Jesus' sermon we move from the norms of the kingdom to the Witness of the kingdom. All of what Jesus has previously taught is to prepare us to be witnesses of the Kingdom.

The evidence of a true conversion that produces qualities of recognizing our sinfulness, hating sin and mourning over it, being willing to be made into what God wants us to be, hungering and desiring after God and His righteousness, being merciful, having a heart that is pure and wanting conformity with the will of God through the transformation of our minds/our hearts, being peacemakers and knowing that living like this will bring persecution in some way or form because we are truly not of this world.

How logical of Jesus to then instruct us that all of this is required because we are the witnesses of the kingdom of God. All of these norms of the Christian life are there for a very specific purpose and that is to be witnesses of the kingdom. These

norms are what constitute being a witness for the kingdom of God which is a God glorifying enterprise.

The teaching we have from Jesus is the believer as a witness. It is not enough to be a believer. There is a purpose that is clear for the believer and that is as a witness of and for the kingdom rooted in the purpose of glorifying our Father in heaven.

Meditate for a moment on how logical this is.

Jesus has already told us that when we live according to the norms of the kingdom we will attract attention even if it is only in the form of opposition. You cannot be a Christian under any normal circumstances and live in vacuum - you cannot live in some kind of monkish isolation and claim to be a Christian or try to make some foolish argument that you and God have differences or say some idiotic thing like "God and I have issues." No, God never has issues. And all we have is sin in disobedience.

Don't tell me your friend or relative is a Christian when they have no desire for the Word of God, no desire to be with God's people, no desire to live according to the norms of the kingdom or have no desire to be a witness for the kingdom. That is a perfect picture of a godless person who does not know Christ by a supernatural rebirth from above that comes by God's grace and grace alone.

Anyone who would have the boldness to say that they are a Christian and have that kind of an attitude has suffered from a man made conversion not a God made one. God changes the heart and right understanding and reasoning follows, not perfectly but it follows and matures as we learn to trust and obey.

Jesus is proclaiming that we have a purpose in the world regardless of how our witness is received. We are here to leave a mark on the world. We are here to make a difference in this sinful, unholy, wicked and depraved world of sinners whether it is appreciated or not. In the end, all of the world is without Christ and is nothing but a heap of sin and all the results of sinners living in sin.

And yet, God puts good things in the midst of all of this even though it may be corrupted by sin. The beauty of His creation, music, art, poetry, books that have value, and even lost people who even in their sin can seem to be nicer people than most Christians we know.

But we are to show mercy and be meek and be peacemakers not compromisers.

And so it is amazing to me that Jesus uses the metaphors of salt and light to describe what our witness is to be like.

The world is rotting and putrefying in sin, like meat left too long in the midday sun in the open market in Jerusalem. But when the proper salt is added to treat the meat, it delays the rotting process.

This is an incredible truth about why God has his kingdom people.

All foods are not enjoyed by everybody and they still have to be preserved, prepared, and served properly.

We are the salt of the earth Jesus says. We are the preservative for anything that may be good in this sin ridden world.

Everyplace place where there is a genuine normal Christian living as they should is a better place to some degree than if that person was not there.

So when entire villages of Christians are murdered and burned out, the place is worse than what it was regardless of the intolerance to the Christians. The place was a better place because they were there.

Wherever it is you work, it is a better place because of you. Your department, your office, your classroom, your assembly line would be a worse and more sinful place if you were not there. If you are living out the norms of the kingdom you are making a difference whether it is appreciated or not and sometimes it is appreciated.

People recognize something different about you and ask your opinion or see that you do not compromise on certain moral matters and they admit to you that that they are morally indifferent and this gives you an opportunity to build a bridge to

the gospel, whether it is received or not. But you by God's grace have made a difference.

They may appreciate your kinder words or gentler attitude when you don't have to be kinder or gentler especially if you are a supervisor or some other kind of authority in the workplace.

My wife counsels me at times and says," it is not what you have said that is wrong but the tone of your voice that makes it unacceptable."

And so we are the salt of the earth and this is meant to keep us from compromise. It means we are here for a purpose and God cares enough about sinners to preserve His people and the word of God through the ages so all sinners who He will save by His grace for His purpose and for His pleasure will be saved.

As I said earlier, a true believer cannot be isolated from the church or from the world.

The same goes for compromise.

Ligon Duncan, an elder at First Presbyterian church in Jackson Miss. says this about compromise:

"Why if the world hates us for who we are, one sure way to get along with the world is to just give in at a few points. Well, why do we want to be so dogmatic, so distinctive, so different, surely we are being a little over the top, a little bit extreme in our commitment. Surely we can give in on these points. So isolation and compromise are both temptations that every generation of Christians faces as we contemplate what our proper relationship is to the world. The Lord Jesus is waiting for us in those temptations. And He is saying don't do that, you are salt and you are light.

Every Christian knows the temptation to withdraw from the world and to be indifferent to it, or to compromise with the world and actually accommodate our thinking, our living and our desires according to the world. We know Christians, who in their quest not to compromise, have ended up hating the world and everything in

it. Not only do they relish the thought of the world being burned in the intense flames of the judgment of God, but they do not care how many people go to hell. They do not care about witnessing to them, and they do not care about their own lives and making them better and contributing to them, they just do not care. They are antagonistic to the world. There are Christians today, who would like to take that tact in their relationship to the world. We live in a land, which has been blessed with things precisely because of God's blessings. And our land has turned its back upon God, and so there are many Christians who are frankly mad about that. And they want to relate to this world by crucifying it. They respond to the tendency to compromise on the part of some of their brethren by being totally antagonistic. They are in a combat mode against the world."

But I remind you that Jesus said we are here to make a difference.

Vs. 13 but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty *again*? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

You become absolutely foolish in the eyes of men and of no value to the kingdom if you lose your saltiness. For someone to say that they are a Christian and not live according to the norms of the kingdom while in the world will be seen for the hypocrisy that it is and the world will completely disregard you and the church will have need to discipline you and at the worst expel you and turn you over to Satan for chastisement with the hope that it will bring repentance and a full heart for doing kingdom service. (the Haiti and the Baptists thing)

And in making a difference we are also told

**14You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;
15 nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.16 "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.**

The Lord Jesus is saying, I didn't give you light, I didn't make you light, I didn't

enlighten your hearts and your minds so that you could keep it to yourself. I did it so that you would share it with the world, so that you would influence the world by truth. You are to be spiritual light in the midst of depravity. You are to be spiritual wisdom in the midst of untruth. And that requires you to have a burning desire to do good for the world. To be an active witness in the world is to show genuine concern for the world.

It is a fact that many of the advances made on behalf of helping the world maintain any sense of hope for the masses has come from kingdom people. The greatest advances in prison reform, orphanages, medical care, abolition of slavery, abolition of child labor and so on came first from God's people especially since the 17th Century.

(Note: Much of that was retreated from since the Monkey trial thru the 70's.

In this country. Missions were often veiled colonial enterprises. Note Dan's father in Haiti. After WWII and the "modern missionary movement changed this)

Yet, this can lead to a great temptation.

And what is our temptation? What is the great temptation if we do have a heart to bear witness to the world, a true concern for the world? Well, isn't the great temptation there to actually compromise with the world? Too often those who desire to influence the world the most are who are most tempted to give in to the thinking of the world. And so Jesus again reminds us that the great temptation in effecting our concern for the world is a compromise with the world, becoming like the world, ceasing to be light, but the only way we can do good to the world is to be light. If we become darkness, we can do the world no good and we do not bring glory to our Father in heaven

And so, we learn that we must hate the world without hating the world, but we must learn to love the world without loving the world. That is what Jesus is saying here. We must love the world without loving the world. Our love must be in

accordance with truth and it must be without compromise.

We must truly have a concern for people. We must truly love them in the sense of looking out for their best interest, not simply feeling kindly towards them, but tangibly looking out for their best interest. But even as we do so, we must not love at the compromise of truth, or else our love ceases to be love. I am okay, you're okay, is not the gospel, it is heresy. We do not show love by saying, I am okay, you're okay. In fact, the gospel is closer to I am not okay - you're not okay. But the Lord Jesus has done something about that and you can receive it if you embrace Him by faith.

To love is not to condone sin. It is not love to say, oh God will accept you no matter how you live towards Him, no matter how you relate to Christ. That is not love. It is love to say, bow the knee. It is loving to say, kiss the Son, it is loving to say, that way of living is opposition to God, and I love you so much that I risk your rejection of me to tell you so. It is not love to say, oh we must embrace every lifestyle because how could we be judgmental about people in the way they chose to live?

So I ask, if they choose to be adulterers, is the loving thing to say to those adulterers, "Oh God will bless you anyway." Is the loving thing to say to those who choose perverted forms of sexuality to say to them, "Oh God will accept you anyway," or is the loving thing to quote Paul and to say, that those who are thieves and liars and adulterers and fornicators and perverse will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

If that is God's truth, then it is not love to say it is not.

Those who truly love do not condone the sin of the world precisely because they love. It is a love without compromise. But we still need to reach out to the person. And that means for instance, when we show true godly love for the homosexual, the alcoholic, the drug addict, the three-time loser, the wife abuser, or the nicest person we know who rejects God, we do not condone the sinful choice of behavior.

We say we love, we love at cost, but your behavior will destroy you and it is an affront to God and you must embrace Him if you would find the grace of forgiveness. That is true love. And that is the love that Christ is calling us to in this passage. Christians must remember who they are and what they are here for.

And Jesus reiterates that in verse 16, when He says, let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven. We are God's people. We are salt and light. That is His estimation of us no matter what the world thinks. And because we are salt and light, we must live in such a way to bear witness to His work in us for He is working to will and to do his good pleasure in us and so be working out work out your salvation.

Do we consciously in our callings - in our vocations, at work and in the neighborhood, live so that the world knows whom we belong to?

Christians must live in this way not to draw attention to themselves but to Christ and the Glory of the Father. The Pharisees did that. The Pharisees lived in such a way that the world would say to them, "how pious you are."

We said earlier, we will get attention if we are living the norms of the Beatitudes.

Christ says, My goal for you My disciples is that I want you to live in such a way that they will see your good works and not praise you, but glorify the Father who is in heaven .

(Illustration about Deborah at school.)

"If we have no other way of doing good--if we are poor, and unlearned and unknown--yet we may do good by our lives. No sincere and humble Christian lives in vain. The feeblest light at midnight is of use." Albert Barnes

And I will add to that, because it will glorify my Father who is in Heaven.

As we finish this morning consider this final statement in relation to being salt and light and its relationship to bringing glory to God the Father.

This is the first time in this Gospel that God is called Father. It will recur 44 times, a number only exceeded by John's Gospel. In the Sermon on the Mount it occurs 16 times.

We get so accustomed to calling God our Father that we fail to realize how revolutionary this was in Jesus' day when thinking of "the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity whose name is Holy", Isaiah 57:15, is how He was thought of.

Jesus forever changed the way we think of God.

Jesus forever changed the way we live for God.

Let's pray that our thinking and our living is truly glorifying our Father who is in Heaven for Jesus' sake.

(Move on to Ephesians...the church glorifying God.)

Now let's look at some teaching that was given by Paul a number of years later and that builds upon this completely in the context of the church giving glory to God.

I'll begin with a quote from my friend and brother, Shane Becker,

"(1) God unleashes the display of his glory (2) through dramatic cosmic restoration under the rule of the enthroned Christ (3) enjoyed by and enacted through the church" That is exquisitely esoteric coming from a laid back Aussie.

However it is intended to be understood by all believers in Christ's church.

Simplified: God displays His glory through the church.

In the era of the New Covenant:

God unleashes the display of His own glory more fully now than ever before—nothing is now held back, especially in light of His glory manifested in Christ as we discussed last evening.

The New Covenant Era is dramatic because it is exciting and tense in the revealing of gripping events and actions, in a way that grabs men's attention and causes an excited, shocked and even startled reaction to a very noticeable degree and often

with surprising suddenness. The world was and is being turned upside down by the preaching of the Gospel.

The continued and increasing persecution of Christian people groups is an ever-present indicator of this and even it is unto the praise of His glorious grace.

This glory is all revealed under Christ because Christ rules and reigns as head of all things and in this New covenant era, the Church comprised of Jew and Gentile as, the bride, the body of Christ, His Temple in Him and One New People in Christ – is God’s chosen means of displaying His glory now. This has **never** been accomplished before. (all Covenant theologians present here tonight may throw stones at me after this session)

The Church – is God’s chosen means of displaying His glory now.

God is a glory displaying and pursuing God.

God is in pursuit of his own glory thru Christ’s church. This is the overriding umbrella under which God operates in the world. We see this in Ephesians:

”he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— to the praise of his glorious grace . . .” Ephesians 1:5-6a

We are also chosen “. . . in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.” Ephesians 1:12

We are sealed by the Holy Spirit “ . . . who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory”. Ephesians 1:14

The drama unfolds because “9And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

In light of this Paul prays that we might know his power towards us . . .

20which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22And God placed all things under his feet and appointed

him to be head over everything for the church, 23which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way

Christ is seated far above all rule and authority. God is bringing everything under his rule. He is the one who displays and unleashes in the universe the fullness of God who fills everything in every way. And the means is His church! Christ is the fullness of God who fills everything in every way. And that fullness is displayed “in his body” – the church.

Through the church – the living theatre of God’s glory - displayed before a heavenly audience is – his love, his unsearchable riches, and his immeasurable grace that would cleanse and eternally unite a once sinful people to himself and to each other. God is saying “Look at the display of my Glory! Look at the display of my Son and His redemptive work in and through His Church!

And all the heavenly hosts fall before Him in worship saying, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God almighty. Awesome and mighty are his deeds for he has done great things!”

In Ephesians 2:12-16 you’ll recall that Paul reminded the Ephesians that they were ‘separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel . . . without hope and without God . . . but now in Christ Jesus you who were away have been brought near through the blood of Christ” and he has made the two – believing Jews and Gentiles – ONE by destroying the hostility by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. For the purpose of creating “in Himself” “one new man” – “one body” – this is “the Church”

Something God put in place – according to his unfolding plan God had the centerpiece of his Glory up to this point in a people defined by decent and latitude & longitude.

God has now abolished all that established Israel as a special national people and has formed a new people which include Jews and Gentiles according to Ephesians 2.

In this unfolding drama He has brought about dramatic change. It occurred at the cross “in his flesh”. Believing Gentiles are now central to the new work being built together into a holy temple as a dwelling place for God.

Ephesians 3:4-6

4In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, **5**which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. **6**This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

Again we see the mystery element again – not being revealed previously. But now been revealed by the Spirit to the apostles and prophets.

- What I would like you to see here is the details of the mystery.
- Mystery = Gentiles heirs. We knew God would bless all nations (Gen 12:3 – all peoples blessed through Abraham).
- National Israel appeared central to this plan (and was until now) – as though God would bless the world through the establishment of the commonwealth of Israel with the centralized temple.
- God has surprisingly turned this around with a New Citizenship.

Significance of the Temple - 2:19-22

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, **20**built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. **21**In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22**And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

The OT Temple indwelt by God forms a picture to help us understand this NT Fulfillment – People form a temple to be indwelt by God’s Spirit. You!

The picture here is not Spirit filling individuals but of the creation of a building – each of us are a part of – bricks as it were – with Christ the chief cornerstone – this one building is filled by his Spirit. Just as one man has one Spirit so the one body

of Christ is filled with his one Spirit. There is one temple being created - we are being built together.

Oh that God may add another piece this day in this glorious ongoing construction project of the Spirit!

To appreciate the significance of this reality for Paul and the Ephesians -

Acts 19 to 28 gives the big picture of what was happening that really fills Ephesians with greater context and meaning. Amazing. Let me give you some highlights in brief.

Paul in Ephesus:

Acts 19

- Paul enters the synagogue and 'spoke boldly' but because of Jews that bagged Christianity he went to a secular hall to teach.

- Then sons of Sceva - local Jewish exorcists - seeing Paul's success with miracles and healing in the name of Jesus try the same trick with a demon possessed man. And the man in whom was the evil spirit said he knew Jesus & Paul but had never heard of them gave them a beating so they ran off naked and wounded.

What drama- what glory 17 "And this became known to all the residents of Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks. And fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was extolled."

Acts 20 - Paul later causes a Riot at Ephesus because his teaching is turning people away from the lucrative idol trade business. Rioters argued, "There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited"]

Acts 21 - Paul goes away Ephesus and while in Miletus sent for the Ephesian elders to join him there. In encouraging them he mentions vs 19 "served with tears and trails that happened to me through the plots of the Jews". He tells them he is now going to Jerusalem and knows imprisonments and affliction await.

Acts 21: vs 28 Paul is arrested in Jerusalem wrongly accused of taking Trophimus the Ephesian into the temple. The Jews bringing the accusation are from 'Asia' almost certainly from Ephesus. (Paul speaking to the Ephesian elders refers to his stay with them as being 'in Asia'.).

No doubt they are seeking opportunity to expose Paul's new Temple teaching and inclusion of the Gentiles.

In Acts 22 Paul gives his defense and is shut down when he says the Lord sent him to the Gentiles because of gospel rejection from the Jews.

At this point the Jews shut down the proceedings with a temper tantrum, throw off their cloaks, flings dust in the air, call for the death of Paul.

Paul as a Roman citizen is given some level protection in custody while over 40 Jews vow to neither eat nor drink until they kill him. Thanks to Paul's sister's son learning of the plot it was unsuccessful. And Paul ends up in Rome under house arrest.

And while under house arrest in Rome Paul writes to the Ephesians,

21In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. Ephesians 2.

People are the temple! Gentile believers as well as Jewish believers!!

And in proclaiming this truth to them in person and later in prison says, "I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you" (Eph 3:13)

The building of God's new temple with the Gentile inclusion, made up of Ephesian believers, had Paul put in prison.

And by further revelation such as in Ephesians we learn that by union with Christ we are his body, crucified with Christ, raised with him, seated in the heavenly places. And by extension now we are this temple, in which the Spirit dwells.

Paul is driving us in the book of Ephesians to understand the Truths about the Church, the body of Christ. He tells us in Ephesians:-

He blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. He chose us, predestined us, cleanses us, redeems us, lavishes grace upon us, gives us an inheritance, seals us with his Spirit as the guarantee, gives us hope, riches, power. Gives us the risen enthroned Christ, unites us with Christ as 'his body', made us alive together with Christ. We are saved us by grace. We are his workmanship. He has abolished in his flesh all that separated us from the covenants of promise. We are brought near, members of the household of God, saints. The temple in which he dwells. Given knowledge and mysteries revealed. The display of his glory and wisdom. We can have Christ dwell in our hearts through faith. God is our father we are beloved children. Christ loved us – gave himself for us. The Spirit fills us.

And the Church is nourished by Christ.

In Conclusion

Church, Paul is seeking to wake you up and put before you a vision of reality – you are part of something incomprehensively awesome.

You are the final chapter of the display of God's glory through his son Jesus Christ (as head) and His body (the church).

You are the reality of which Christian marriage at its best is a picture – you are the bride of Jesus Christ whom he has pursued, purchased and wooed - as a loving savior and husband – he has captured your heart and drawn you lovingly to himself.

The Temple in the Old Testament was but a picture, a shadow of a greater reality.

That greater reality is here – right here in front of me. You are that greater reality.

You are the temple of God in whom His Spirit dwells. You are the mystery kept hidden but now revealed – a new people for His own possession.

You are the church of Jesus Christ.