

**Matthew in Biblical Perspective:
A Royal Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King –
The Christian and the Church in the World – Part 1**

Matthew 5:13-17

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May 2, 2010 – Morning Sermon

Our text for this study is found in Matthew 5. This is the Word of God. It's the Truth. Matthew 5:1-17 says

1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

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

4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad,

for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. 14

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine

before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. 17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish

the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an

iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.

The grass withers. The flower fades. This is the Word of God. It abides forever

and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

Question, what happens when the grace of God comes through the Gospel of Jesus Christ and saves someone? We know what happens. That grace begins to work in their life. They are blessed. We are told that blessing of the Gospel then begins to nurture eight Gospel traits that we have been studying in the beatitudes from our text above. The first is poor in spirit but you can't even come to Jesus as your Savior until you are poor in spirit. Jesus is not a help up or hand up but a Savior of dead sinners.

When I come to understand my spiritual bankruptcy which is being poor in spirit, I say 'no' to my arrogance and pride and 'yes' to the fact that I'm a sinner and can't save myself then it leads me to Christ. As Christ works in my life it leads us to mourn. We begin to mourn over our sin because we see our sin and the sinfulness of our sin. We see the effects and the consequences of our sin so that those who are poor in spirit then mourn.

What kind of way do they live? They now have the power of Christ in them but they are not arrogant. There is meekness because we are what we are by the grace of God. Meekness is not weakness. It's God's strength under control exhibited with humility and graciousness. Where does that lead the meek? That leads the meek to hunger and thirst for righteousness because we who have been given the righteousness of Christ to present us to glory now desire to pursue righteousness for Christ. We who have the righteousness of Christ given to us now want to pursue righteousness to live for Him.

What does that lead us to? That leads us to being merciful. We don't say "Gotcha!" when we see people in sin; we bring the Gospel to them in mercy and ministry. Where does that lead the merciful? The merciful desire to be pure in heart. They want to live their life from the inside out with integrity. They don't want the Pharisaical life of just doing deeds externally that get by when people look at us. We are asking God to do a work in our heart so that from the inside out we live for Christ. Where does that lead us? That will lead us to being peacemakers. That is we bring the peace of Christ so people can have the peace of God through Jesus Christ. Where does that lead us? That leads us to persecution.

What will the world's response be to such people who have been saved by grace and who live out that grace saying 'no' to arrogance and 'yes' to gentleness, 'no' to pride and 'yes' to Christ? The normal expectation is persecution. Jesus said, "They did it to the prophets and they will do it to you." They will do it to Him and they will do it to you.

What is your response when the world persecutes you? Jesus said, "You don't go die in a pile of self pity, you rejoice and be glad for you have now been granted not only to believe in Him but to suffer for His sake. So you now embrace

that call.” Praise God for it and be glad. Remember it’s not here you have your reward, it’s there in the new heavens and the new earth. Be glad for great is your reward in heaven. Praise God that the best is yet to come, even in the suffering as we bear the marks of Christ now, we rejoice.

Where does that bring us? Here is this Gospel blessing, this Gospel life, persecution with a response of rejoicing and where does that lead us to? That leads us to our ministry. What is our ministry? Our ministry is salt and light in this world. This leads us to the second section of the Sermon on the Mount. This is found in Matthew 5:13-16;

13 “You (who are blessed, poor in spirit, merciful, persecuted etc) are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. 14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Where does that lead you? What is our ministry between now and our reward? We are to be salt and light that penetrates a lost culture and generates praise to God. So our calling is to be salt and light to penetrate the culture, to propagate and generate praise to the Father through the way we live. That’s what God has given to us. I read that and say, “Whoa, wow, what a privilege, what a responsibility, O how that is overwhelming. Look at this world! God, we are what You called to penetrate it? We are Your plan???”

I want to help you rightly focus on the Table this morning and this text gives us two things in observation. The first observation is about the Christian. The second observation will be about the world but let’s look at the Christian first. Those who are Gospel blessed, Gospel growing, Gospel developing, Gospel useful to the Lord, are salt and light. Jesus reaches to two very common metaphors/elements that everyone would have known about – salt and light. They would have been in every house there. You needed both salt and light to exist. He uses them as word pictures to give us a picture of what the believer is. We are salt and light together. “Ya’ll disciples, Gospel blessed, Gospel matured, ya’ll are salt of the earth, ya’ll are light of the world.” What an awesome statement on the side of a hill in Galilee. They would immediately begin to think of salt. What is salt? In that day salt was a seasoning but more importantly it was an antiseptic. It persevered and purified because they did not have deep freezers or refrigerators. Salt is what was used purify and preserve. Why? It was because everything would be deteriorating. So you would be salt and light. He is saying “There is a world where you are My preservative. You restrain it from its putrefaction and deterioration.” The second thing He says is that you are not only salt but you are light. You are the light of the world. That tells you that the world

is in darkness. Jesus says, "I use you to dispel darkness. You are the light of the world and I have put you there to be the light of the world and you are the salt of the earth." That's what it tells us about the Christian.

What does He tell us about the world? He directly tells us what the Christian is which is, you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world but by doing that He is indirectly telling us something about the world. That is the second observation. What is the world? The world is two things. The first thing is the world is deterioration and secondly the world is darkness. It is in a downward spiral. The world is sin cursed, broken in sin, and it is in a downward spiral of deterioration. It is not evolving up but it is devolving down. The only thing that keeps it from being utterly depraved is the presence of salt that restrains it. We call this common grace where God uses His people to restrain the evil from being as evil as it would be. The world is in deterioration and the world is in darkness.

What is really interesting is the world does not believe that. The world actually believes it is progressing when in reality an honest evaluation of history tells you every century is worse than the previous. Technologically there may be advances and God's common grace through salt is keeping it from being as evil as it would be but overall let's just look at the last century we just left. In wars and violence, more people were killed in the 20th century than in all recorded history added together and we are not even counting abortion and infanticide, those millions. More were killed in that last century and man we are head long into this one to get ahead of it. Yet the world says "We're progressing." In reality we are descending into a death spiral. How challenging it is right now in our own country, in our own culture because how great is the darkness if we call light, darkness, and darkness, light. I look out and see Asian, African, and European descent. Can I tell you where we came from, our forbearers? Our forbearers were pagans. In family there was polygamy, bigamy and whatever it wanted to be. There was sexuality, heterosexuality, homosexuality which didn't matter. Then God reached in with the Gospel, salt and light, and brought our forbearers to life. He transformed them. Then we started getting marriage right with one man and one woman for one life. Then we started getting family right and life right. Then we started getting sexuality right with heterosexuality within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman. Now in the name of progression where are we headed? We are headed right back into paganism. How great is the darkness when those in the light call light, darkness and darkness, light! But you are to be the light of the world. You are salt and you are light and those two observations bring us to two challenges.

What are the two challenges? Notice that the text doesn't say "Go be salt" but it says those of you who are Gospel blessed with the beatitudes, are salt. You are the salt. It doesn't say "Go be light." It says you are the light. It is very clear in our culture that the world is in a death spiral. One of the reasons it's in a death spiral is because we're not salt and light. Don't be amazed when the world does what it does in sin. Ask yourselves this question – why aren't we restraining it like salt?

Why aren't we transforming it like light? Here's why. The salt can get adulterated, mixed up and contaminated by mixing with other things and then it loses its saltiness. Now it's just good for road work. Just throw it out and walk on it. The challenge is don't let the salt get contaminated with adulteration.

Secondly, don't let the darkness come because we have concealed the light. Don't hide the light. Let it shine. Let it shine. The two problems are the adulteration of the salt because we have let the mindset of the world grab our mind and the lifestyle of the world grabs our lives, so we're not different. What makes Christianity influential is not because we're the same but because we are connected and different. We are in the world but not of the world. We don't run from the world. God works in my life personally but I don't go over here and have a private faith. God works in my life personally to send me in the world as salt and light. So we don't privatize our faith. When we do get into the world we have to be in the world but not of the world. There ought to be something different but if we're not different that means we have become adulterated and contaminated therefore we don't show the difference that grace makes. So we have to deal with adulteration and contamination. The second thing is out of embarrassment, fear and lack of conviction we start hiding the light. We are in the Lord's army but we become secret soldiers. Instead of letting the light shine we conceal the light. Those are the two challenges.

Now here are two takeaways for us. We have two more studies on this passage where we will do one on salt and one on light. I long for this. I am thankful for 50 years of God's blessing of having this. Because of where we are there is a need for God to bring us to another level. So the first takeaway is we need to be a committed church to do three things – evangelize with the Gospel, train and equip people with the Gospel so they are not adulterated and hiding the light, and thirdly we need to send them into the world. So we as a church need to be Gospel evangelizing, Gospel equipping and Gospel disciple making to send people into the world and that's where we need to be committed.

I know there are all kinds of exotic ideas of re-engineering and re-doing the church but no, we need to go back to what the Bible says with confidence in the Word preached and taught, in fellowship, worship and disciple making. We need to be engaged in personal evangelism. Who have you shared Christ with? We need to be committed to personal evangelism, small group disciple making and equipping so the salt doesn't get adulterated and the light will shine. Then we need to send them and connect. We're not going to isolate.

What will the world do? Yes, they will persecute. We'll just rejoice and keep connecting. We will keep on ministering. We will keep on working so that we're salt as an antiseptic to preserve and keep from deterioration and we are light so that light will dispel the darkness and send it away. What is darkness? It is the absence of light so let's get the light shining. When the light shines darkness has to flee. Darkness can never overcome light. Light always overcomes darkness.

Here is this glorious opportunity but we have to be a committed church to carry it out. We need Christians in leadership in impact in New York, Washington DC, Hollywood and University City functioning as culture shapers but the answer is not found in Los Angeles at Hollywood Blvd or New York on Wall Street or Washington DC on Pennsylvania Ave or University City at School House lane. The answer is found in Everywhere USA on Church Street. It is where Gospel blessed, Gospel saturated churches are evangelizing, equipping and sending – to Washington DC, Los Angeles, New York and all of those places, but it starts here. That impacts our budget making, our thinking, the way we use our time, the way we use God's money and everything else that we are committed to personal evangelism, equipping believers and then sending them into this world because you are God's plan. You are not a salt but you are the salt of the earth. You are *the* light of the world. With all of those others who claim to know the name of Jesus Christ, you are the light and salt. You are the light of the world and the salt of the earth and that leads me to the last takeaway.

The last takeaway is we need to be committed as Christians. We who have been personally saved are not going to privatize our faith. We're going to be salt and light. We're not going to be isolated. We're going to be connected to the world but not conformed to it. We're not going to disconnect but we are going to be different. We're going to be different graciously, humbly and Godly but we're going to be different with meekness, with the grace of God at work within us but we're going to penetrate in order to propagate praise to our Father and the winning of lost people to Christ as Lord and Savior. There will be a company of believers in this world who are blessed by the Gospel, who are growing in the Gospel, who are being persecuted, who respond with joy and gladness and then who penetrate as salt and light. I desperately ask God that we can be a part of that company. We don't want to be adulterated and contaminated salt that is just thrown out and might as well be road filler. We don't want to be a light that is hidden and useless but we are connected. We are not going to play church, we are the church. We're not candy, we're salt. We're not just anything; we're the light of the world. We want to be Gospel faithful, Gospel penetrating and worship propagating to Father. When you look at this world you say, "Man I'm about to be overwhelmed" and I understand that. Take courage because you are about to sit at the Table with the One who overcame the world and He will be with you to the end.

This past week has been a challenging week for us. We have been praying for over eight years as we have sent sons and daughters over seas with our military. I don't know how many have been in arms way and now God in His sovereign providence has taken one to be with Him, Thomas Rivers. Pray for his family. When I heard about it and was spending some time with the family one of the things I was moved to do was to put in a communication piece in Facebook about him, grief and family. One verse also came to mind which was a verse Jesus said in John 15:13; *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.* I knew that was true but I didn't know how true it was until I found

out later that Thomas wasn't actually supposed to go on that patrol. His friend came back from duty and was supposed to go on that patrol but he wasn't going to be able to make it. So Thomas said to his friend, "I'll go for you" and he gave his life for his friend. There was a father and mother who gave their son whose son gave his life for a friend.

While that moves my heart I want it to move you to this Table with joy and reverence for you are coming to the body and blood of Jesus Christ whose Father sent Him and He gave His life, not for friends, but for enemies that we might be redeemed and become His brothers and sisters forever. Salt and light? Absolutely. Overwhelming? Oh yes but come to your Savior and fix your eyes on Him. Hallelujah, what a Savior! He has overcome the world for you and now we are His. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments we can be together. Would You bless Your people as they gather around this Table in these moments? I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.

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