

Sunday Sermon February 12, 2017

Sermon Text: Matthew 5: 13-16

Sermon Theme: The Best Sermon Ever: Be Salty and Shine Brightly

<sup>13</sup> “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.

<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven

Country singer Tim McGraw recently released a song called *Humble and Kind*. He said that this was a very hard song for him to record because as he sang he thought of his daughters and the values he was trying to teach to them. He lists some of those values in his song and sums them up with the refrain: *Always be Humble and Kind*.

Humility and Kindness are values that any parent would want their children to show others. Last week we saw that Jesus directed us to live humble and gentle lives as part of our faith life. While these are great values and it is a touching song, Tim does miss a couple of things that Jesus says are important. Tim never mentions Jesus direction from our text today to be salty and to shine brightly.

There are many times that bits and pieces of the Best Sermon Ever are read and taught apart from the whole sermon of Jesus. However, we should always look at the context of Jesus’ preaching. He is preaching to his disciples and a crowd of people who have repented of their sins, they believe in Jesus as their Savior. Jesus is now guiding them in their life of faith and showing them how they can and should live their life joyfully as his children.

Jesus tells us to be salt and light in this world. <sup>13</sup> **“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.**

<sup>14</sup> **“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**

One of the reasons that Jesus is the best teacher ever is that he uses examples that people readily identify with and understand. In his first example, he compares the life of a Christian to salt.

Salt is very common in our lives today. We use salt on our food to make it taste better, salt is used to thaw icy and snowy roads, we use salt in our water softeners and the doctor may tell us to cut down on our salt intake for various medical problems.

Salt was also very common in Bible times, but for different reasons. Salt was used to preserve meat from spoiling in the heat of the Middle East. Without the salt, the meat would spoil very quickly and soon it would be inedible.

Salt was also used symbolically. This preservation quality of salt was used to symbolize longevity and good will. When a covenant was made or a deal was struck, salt was used to symbolize that this covenant was to last for many years and it was also to show the good will of both sides and their intentions to honor the covenant or deal.

Jesus tells us that we are to be salty. More specifically he tells us that faith has the same preserving quality on earth as salt does for meat. As believers lead their joyful life of faith on this earth, by word and action, we will reach out to others with the Word of God. We will share with them the wonderful message of our Savior. We model our faith in Jesus to the world by following the morals, ethics and standards that God sets out to us in his Word.

If salt were not used on the meat, it begins to spoil. Soon, the sight and the smell of rotten meat is clear for all. Without salt, believers in this world using the Word of God, the world would be much different. Without believers there would be no one to point out God’s standard of right and wrong, there would be no one to call others to repent of their sins, no one to model a godly way of life. Without the preserving salt of God’s

Word preached by his people, the world would begin to slip further and further into the rottenness and decay of sin and unbelief.

Jesus says that salt can lose its saltiness. This is another reference to something that the people knew well. When the natural salt taken from the Dead Sea sat and was not used it would become stale and go bad. It could no longer be used for meat and would have to be thrown out. The salt lost its saltiness.

How can God's people lose their saltiness? God knows our hearts. He knows that instead of being salty and living a godly life that we often feel that it is easier to live according to the world's way. He knows there are times that we lack the love for souls, even the souls of family and friends that we hold so dear. He knows that we use our busy lives as excuses to not take on this task of sharing the Word. Using the same salt analogy Jesus did, if we sit idle and do not make use of the opportunities God gives us to reach out with the Word. We become less salty because we are not doing the job of preserving which Jesus gives us.

And yet, even though we are not as salty as we should be, in his love, Jesus forgives us and he gives us a job. He allows us to part of his amazing plan to share his Word with people. Even though we are imperfect, sinful and unsalty, even though we might stumble and bumble with that Word, Jesus uses us to reach out to others with the Word..

Besides salt, Jesus also uses the picture of light to illustrate how we are to reach out to others with the Word.

Before there were radars that could see for miles around, above and below a ship, captains had to navigate based upon charts, stars, and landmarks. When the sea was calm and the sky clear this was no trouble at all. But when a storm rolled in, the skies were cloudy, the waves rolling and crashing and the air foggy, the captain was thankful that there was a lighthouse to guide them away from danger and to safety.

The light of that lighthouse would cut through the fog and the rain so that the ships would not hit the rocks which were below. It was the landmark that the captain could use to find out where he was and where the safe harbor was.

Jesus calls us the light of the world and he tells us to shine brightly. This world is often filled with storms, the clouds of sin make life difficult, our minds are foggy with worry, doubt and despair, but the love of Jesus can shine through all of these troubles and problems and provide the path to safety and security that is only found in him. We are the lighthouses providing the light of Jesus in this stormy world.

Just as he did with the salt, Jesus provides an analogy that shows that sinful people how important it is to live their lives of faith, shining brightly.

**You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.** Jerusalem was the capital of Judea and considered to be the greatest city of the Jews. It was also called the city on the hill. There was no way that Jerusalem could be hidden. It sat on a hill that could be seen from the other mountains and hills around it, the lights that shown from Jerusalem at night could not be extinguished. Jesus was showing the people that in the same way this Jewish landmark could not be hidden, neither should they attempt to hide their faith in this world.

**Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.** When lights were lit in the house the light was shared by the whole family. It provided a work and hobby light for mom and dad and a night light for the children who were supposed to be in bed. It would be a waste of money and resources for the father to the lamp and then to cover the light so that no one could see the wonderful light that was there.

In the same way, our light of faith is not to be hidden or shielded by anything. We are to be like that lighthouse in this sinful world, shining brightly with the message of Jesus in all we say or do. Yet, just as there are times that we are not salty, there are also times that we don't want shine brightly. We would rather hide that light of faith under a bowl in order that we can act like everyone else. We want to be free to indulge our sinful urges of greed, selfishness, and sex. We want to think about ourselves and what we want and not care about speaking with others about what they need. We think we have time later to take the cover off of the lamp or to relight the lamp of faith.

It is Jesus who has shined the light of his love into our lives. He has called us out of the darkness of sin into the light of his grace. The Holy Spirit has enlightened us with that Gospel message and has fueled the fire of faith so that our flame of faith shines brightly. We have not deserved any of this love, yet, Jesus does it anyway.

Jesus tells us to reflect this undeserved love that he has shown to us to other people. **“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”** Our light of faith

is an important thing. Just as we were to live life joyfully, we are to live life as salt and we are to allow that light of faith to shine brightly to others. The result of living our faith loudly is that the Holy Spirit will work through that Word that we are sharing and will bring others to faith through that Gospel message.

Be salty and shine brightly. Not something that you would usually say to your children about their life. Yet, God tells us, his children to be salt, live your faith boldly in order to share God's way in this sin rotten world. He also says to shine brightly. Light the world with the message of the love of Jesus. As we reach out with his Word, the Holy Spirit will be do his work in the hearts of many people to bring them to faith that they too might praise the heavenly Father for his goodness and love.