

Matthew051116-100211
Bridge of Hope
September 25, 2011
"Salt and Light"

Introduction: Good morning! My name is Jason, and it is my privilege to continue on in our study in the Gospel of Matthew. Over the last several weeks, we have been discussing the Beatitudes; a list of 8 life-characteristics found in Matthew chapter 5 verses 1-12, that Jesus says would secure for us the approval of God. Also with these life-characteristics there were promises attached to each one.....awesome promises that give us hope.

We also discovered that there is a progression in living out these life-characteristics. Each one in succession built upon the previous, forming our character and conforming our lives to match the life of Jesus.

You should be used to this by now...turn to a friend or someone near you, and talk to them about where you are in the progression of the life-characteristics in the Beatitudes. Take a few minutes to discuss which ones you are finding to be difficult and which ones you are having success....ready, set, go!

VIDEO: Image Bearers

We are moving forward in Matthew 5 today and we are going into an exciting and also challenging portion of Scripture. Let's take a look at our text:

¹¹"Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice 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. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In 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."
Matthew 5:11-16 (ESV)**

At first glance, when you read Matthew 5:1-12, you think that verses 10-12 are basically the same thought and therefore verses 11-12 are simply part of the Beatitude discussion. Most of our Bibles even place a heading after verse 12

separating it from verses 13-16. All of the study I have been doing points to the contrary and for good reason.

What we are going to be talking about for the next 2 weeks are the implications of living out the life-characteristics of a disciple that we read about in verses 1-10 in the Beatitudes. Verses 11-12 are the introduction to these implications...the implication that you and I are to be Salt and Light in our world.

Salt and Light are metaphors that Jesus uses to describe both the “being” of a disciple and also the visible representation of that “being”. We are going to tackle Salt today in just a moment, but first I want to hone in on verses 11-12 before we start rolling on into these awesome metaphors Jesus uses.

Verses 11-12 say:

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."

First of all, does this even make sense? I am blessed when what? You want me to rejoice when? Yeah this is not an easy pill to swallow ladies and gentlemen.

So here's what is going on...Jesus introduces the 8th life-characteristic in verse 10...He says: “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Then, verse 11 expounds on this thought further and Jesus makes this thing personal. It's no longer just a theological idea or something to ponder. Blessed are you when others revile YOU....

This shift in his teaching makes verses 11 and 12 transition to His next thoughts....the personalization of the life-characteristics He just presented.

If you recall, we noted that each one of the Beatitudes built upon the previous and so what we see here is Jesus driving that point home by making it personal to everyone that He was speaking to...when you live this way, YOU will be persecuted...YOU will be reviled...people will utter evil against you falsely on HIS account.

He then makes the response personal as well....no you, but the you is implied....Rejoice! We could spend a month on these two verses alone, but we need to move on to Salt...just understand that Jesus is making a transitional statement here for the sake of driving the point home about 2 things:

1. The disciple's identity
2. Recognition of the disciple's identity

Everything Jesus said in the previous verses is climatically leading to verses 13-16....so let's start with YOU ARE SALT

- **You are the Salt of the Earth**

1. What does salt do? Preserves, gives taste or flavor
 - In light of what Jesus has said to His followers previous to this, Jesus is metaphorically explaining that when you live the way He has described, you are the salt of the earth.
 - Salt in ancient times was used to preserve food. Meat, for instance, was preserved by rubbing salt down past the first layer where the salt would prevent decay. This is an amazing metaphor for what the followers of Jesus will accomplish when they live according to His previous teaching on the 8 life-characteristics called the Beatitudes. Our role as followers of Christ, is that we individually and more precisely, collectively, bring preservation to our world to guard against decay. Are we Salt? Are we massaged down deep into our culture in strategic places to prevent decay? Do our very lives, lived in light of Jesus' Messianic exchange, provide enough salt to a world bent for destruction? Do you care about the moral, emotional, familial, relational, sexual, intellectual, artistic, political, and spiritual decay of our world? If you do, you are Salt. If you do not, you are not salt.
 - Salt also serves the purpose of providing taste or flavor. This is an interesting way to interpret the metaphor. "Disciples are to provide flavor to the world they live in..." What does "provide flavor" mean? Let's take a look at how Paul uses the metaphor with the idea of flavor or taste in mind:

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. Colossians 4:6

Paul's reference here is very similar to Jesus' in Matthew and it is probably on purpose. The connotation here is saltiness or the flavor believers are to utilize is wisdom. In other words, the wisdom of a believer given to them by God will be "salty" to others....it will "taste" good to them....or at least it will have a taste. Every person has different taste for salt, but there is no denying that salt definitely has a taste.

So it is with followers of Jesus. According to Jesus, you WILL be persecuted for His sake. Some will not like the flavor you bring to their world simply because you ARE salt. Some will and will also be drawn to the One who gives you this flavor.

- Un-salty salt is not salt

1. Jesus is painting a very clear picture here...if and when salt loses it's characteristic of being salty, it is no longer useful...it is no longer salt and is good for nothing.

- I am not even sure this is possible from a scientific point of view, but I am not sure that is the point of the metaphor. The point is, once you stop exhibiting the characteristics Jesus mentions previous to this, you are no longer salty.
- Saltiness is referring to character...Godly character. This is character that will get you persecuted because not everyone likes to be around people of Godly character.
- When we lack Godly character...the traits mentioned in the Beatitudes, we are rendered useless and worthy of being cast out and to be trampled on...yikes!
- The question "How shall its saltiness be restored?" is a really tough question. Jesus almost makes it seem like once we lose our saltiness, there is no way to get it back. He makes it seem like there is no way to restore our character and that there is no hope.
- The reality is this: without Christ, there is no hope when you have surrendered your saltiness...you cannot conjure Godly character...contrary to the Oprah-fication of our culture, there is nothing inside of you that can enable you to live the characteristics Jesus says will garner the approval of the Father...This is a major part of His message of the Kingdom of Heaven being near. There is hope found in Jesus!

Conclusion: We saw in the video to open our new study that followers of Jesus...Christians, are Restored Image Bearers. What this means is every human is an image bearer of God's image but the follower of Jesus who has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ is a RESTORED image bearer. This means that the image of God in us at our creation is marred due to sin, but when we accept Jesus' sacrifice and pledge to live our lives for Him, He restores that image in us...This is not only done individually but also corporately, because it is only in community that the actual Body of Christ can be seen.

In light of this, there is a way to live as a Restored Image Bearer. Jesus outlines this for us in the Beatitudes....Approved of God are you who mourn your sin, for you will be comforted. Approved of God are you who are peacemakers for you will be called a son or daughter of God. Not only does He give us the rules of the road for living as a disciple, He also attaches great promises to this lifestyle.

The climax of the Beatitude section is found right here in our discussion of Salt and Light. The heart of the matter is this: Are you salt? Salt is the description of your very being as a disciple of Jesus. Do you bring preservation to your world? Do you preserve and prevent the decay of things around you through the presence of the Holy Spirit? Is

there a distinct flavor that you bring to situations with people in your life? Can the people you love “taste” the God you serve in your words and deeds?

Let’s be honest with ourselves and with God today as we answer these questions and reflect as we gather at the table of the Lord.

Go be salt!