

Matthew051116-100911  
Bridge of Hope  
October 9, 2011  
"Salt and Light"

Introduction: Good morning! My name is Jason, and again, it is my privilege to continue on in our study in the Gospel of Matthew. Last week, we talked about the first metaphor Jesus used from our text in Matthew 5; we talked about what it means to be Salt. Jesus said very plainly to His disciples in Matthew 5:13:

<sup>13</sup>"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.

This "saltiness" that Jesus is referring to is brilliantly communicated to mean a lifestyle lived to develop and become more like Christ...a lifestyle that is hallmarked by the 8 life-characteristics of the Beatitudes found in the preceding verses of chapter 5<sup>1</sup>

Today we turn our attention to the second metaphor Jesus uses to describe disciples....Light

Light, as defined by Dictionary.com ("Light," 2011) is:  
...an illuminating agent or source, as the sun, a lamp, or a beacon.

Light is distinctive and intrusive. No matter how dark a room or situation is, when light is there, the darkness is virtually chased away...even by the smallest light.

So here is our base text for today...We will read the whole text for context:

<sup>13</sup>"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.

<sup>14</sup>"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup>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. <sup>16</sup>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."

Matthew 5:13-16 (ESV)

The Great Apostle John called Jesus the light in his gospel...along with the Word, the light is the other great metaphorical description given to Jesus in the epic 1<sup>st</sup> chapter of the Gospel of John.

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<sup>1</sup> Light. (2011). In *Dictionary.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.dictionary.com>

How, therefore, can Jesus call you and I the Light of the World? Lets take a deeper look at this metaphor to figure out what He means.

- **You are the Light of the World**

1. Again, Jesus is using the plural YOU. This means there is a shaded meaning in His teaching that we have to be careful to understand.

- a. We as individuals have the light of Christ in us. When we come to acknowledge Jesus as our Lord and Savior, He puts His light in us. We are His ambassadors, His witnesses, His body-parts...We can enjoy fellowship with Him and have access to Him personally and individually...but that's not all...
- b. "A city set on a hill cannot be hidden...". The etymology of the word "city" is interesting. It basically is taken from the Latin idea of being a citizen...a city is a place where there is a large or important collection of citizens. This distinguishes it from small town or a rural context. This means that it is a large collection of people....

I'm sure that you have never thought of yourself as a city by yourself and yet we interpret this passage of Scripture usually in an individualistic way. Jesus makes the bold statement that you and I are the Light of the World and then he drives the point home with the metaphor of a city on a hill.

A city at night is something to behold. The collective light of a major city can be seen for miles, especially when it's dark.

Image: Satellite Image of US.jpg

What does it mean to be a city set on a hill? Well, after our discussion last week where we discovered Salt to be referring to character, what Jesus is saying here is that not only are we to desire and develop Godly character, but it should be visible, not only in us as individuals but in the collection of individuals who have this light in them called the church.

Much like the light from the major metropolitan areas seen in our image can be seen from space, so OUR light should be bright enough in our dark world to be seen piercing the darkness. The Apostle Peter says it this way:

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people..." 1Peter 2:9-10 (ESV)

Listen to the language of “community” Peter uses to describe the exchange that has taken place in the People of God. Not only in you as a person but also you as a people.

- **Invisible Light is Worthless**

1. No one lights a lamp or candle without purpose. If you are traversing through a dark room, you turn the light on with purpose...to see!

a. Jesus is really driving the point home with light. But here he takes it a step further to make sure we understand once crucial element to our discipleship. People should know we are disciples. Our light individually and collectively should be seen.

b. Why would Jesus bless us with his light for us to simply hide it? Why would the King of the Universe die for you and I, be raised from the dead, entrust this story of love to mankind and then have mankind hide the warmth and beauty of this light? The answers to these questions are as laughable as the thought that a person would light a lamp or candle and then hide it....it just would not happen....or would it?

c. Jesus mentions placing a lamp on a stand, which sounds like really familiar language...Let's take a look at another place where Jesus uses similar language:

“I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your LAMPSTAND from its place, unless you repent.” Revelation 2:2-5

The church in Ephesus had apparently begun to hide their lamp. Jesus gives a vivid description of what that looks like...they abandoned their first love...and not only that but they stop doing the works that proved their love.

This “works” thing really messes with people. You will say, “I thought I was saved by grace, not by works?”....of course you are! But you are also called to do good deeds that, according to Paul, you were predestined for. Here is where the rubber meets the road in this passage. When you lose your first love...or better put, the love you had at first, you stop doing the things that show your love because its just not there.

It's the same for your light...when the light is in you, you cannot help but do the works that the light drives you to perform....even in the face of the revilers and those who would persecute you for your good deeds...

As a matter of fact, Jesus is basically saying that Salt and Light are visible when you live a life such that when those terrible things happen, you can rejoice and be glad because of this great treasure that is in heaven for you and for us!

Interestingly, Jesus was speaking to an entire church in Ephesus...a collection of people...kind of like a city. And he told them that if they did not get their act together and repent, he would snuff out their light...by removing their lampstand.... (refer to temple/tabernacle lampstand)

Not only is this an individual issue, but it's also a collective issue....we need the world to see our light and we need to make sure that our light is illuminating the right thing....not political lobbies, not individual agendas, not miracles/signs/wonders, lofty theology, pragmatism, church growth models or anything else other than Jesus....the church's job is to illuminate Jesus Christ...bring Him glory...bring Him fame....tell His story.

Conclusion: