

Title: SALT, LIGHT, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, MATTHEW 5:13-20
(Chatham, NJ; 02/06/11, AM) [D – Expository; Jewel Pattern]

Theme: Jesus describes the Christian community as salt and light, and he demands that its righteous behavior exceed the unrighteous behavior of the Pharisees.

Purpose: To explain how these metaphors help identify our lifestyle.

Introduction:

1. Jesus moves from describing the attitudes necessary for Kingdom living to metaphors that inform who we are.
2. Salt and light provide us a picture of how we function in the world.
3. Righteousness, though not a metaphor, characterizes our behavior.
4. We have to be better than the Pharisees.
5. Think about who and what you are.

I. "You are the salt of the earth," Mt. 5:13.

A. What it means.

1. Salt is a common, essential compound in all of creation.
2. It was and is used to cleanse from impurities, to preserve, and to make things taste better. (I've read that it was used like money in ancient Rome.)
3. We sometimes say of someone, "He is the salt of the earth."
4. We mean he is the type of person that brings wholesomeness to society, someone others can depend on.
5. Jesus uses it as a metaphor for decent, responsible, moral, and righteous Christian living.
6. The kind of life that preserves, purifies, and enhances life.

B. What it doesn't mean.

1. It doesn't mean we are the "honey-pot" of the world.
2. We aren't just syrupy sweet people who do whatever others desire to make everything sweet and happy.
3. We don't cow-tow to the moral values of the world; we add Christian values.
4. Christian values always taste bitter to people who want to continue with evil.
5. Salty behavior may not be abrasive but it certainly doesn't lack backbone.
6. It preserves, purifies, and enhances by practicing godliness.

C. We are useless if we lose that kind of saltiness.

II. "You are the light of the world," Mt. 5:14-16.

A. What it means:

1. Jesus is the true light, Jn. 1:4, 9.
2. Light promotes life like the sun which gives life to plants.
3. Light allows us to see; Lincoln educated himself by candlelight, and light allows us to see colors.
4. The light dawned with the advent of Christ, Mt. 4:16.
5. We are light when our deeds reflect Christ living in us.

B. It contrasts with darkness.

1. A metaphor for sin and evil.
2. John 3:19 – humanity loves darkness and fears being exposed.
3. The world is in the grip of profound darkness.
4. Romans 13:12-14, we are to walk in the light.
5. Eph. 5:8-9, it consists of "all that is good and right and true."

- C. Your good deeds will be noticed (16) so there is no need to show them off or wear them like some badge of honor (Mt. 6).

III. The contrasts of righteousness.

- A. Jesus came to fulfill, not abolish the Law (5:17-18).
 - 1. In Paul's detailed rationale of God's plan, he asserts that Jesus is the end of the Law (Romans 10:4), or the thing that the Law pointed to.
 - 2. Although the Old Covenant has been transformed into the New Covenant, Christ upheld the Law by satisfying its demands on our behalf.
 - 3. It became no longer a barrier between us and God or between Jew and Gentile.
- B. Relaxing the commands vs. obeying the commands (19).
 - 1. Mt. 15:1-9 is an example of how the Pharisees created loopholes in order to skirt the demands of the Law.
 - 2. Furthermore, Mt. 23:23-28 suggests they simply ignored more important aspects of the Law and tried to make themselves appear righteous.
 - 3. Jesus will have none of this.
- C. Righteousness must be more than that.
 - 1. Our righteousness must exceed the Pharisees.
 - 2. We must do more than appear righteous; we must be the real thing.
 - 3. Though perfect behavior will not save us and though we have no righteousness without Christ, the New Covenant demands righteous and upright living.

Conclusion:

- 1. The metaphors of salt and light provide the appropriate image of who we are.
- 2. Throughout the Sermon on the Mount Jesus will define what the salt and light will look like and how we should behave.
- 3. The demand for righteousness does not end with the New Covenant, in fact it enhances the need for righteous behavior.
- 4. Though ultimately the demands of the Law are fully met in Christ, we must seek to abide by them in our Christian walk.
- 5. If we are found wanting we must repent and turn to Him.
- 6. That is the first step for all of us: repent, believe, be baptized, and live faithfully.