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Sermon: November 2, 2014  
Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

**“YOU ARE”  
Matthew 5:13-16**

{1 Co 1:26, Msg} Friends, take a good look at the Church. That is, take a good look at yourselves.

{1 Co 1:26, Msg; 1 Co 1:26b-28} **“I don’t see many of ‘the brightest and best’ among [us], not many influential, not many from [elite] families.” “God chose the foolish things of the world... the weak things... the lowly things of this world and the despised things....”**

{1 P 1:2} And yet we **“have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood.”** He chose *us*.

Not us alone. You and I aren’t the only Christ Followers in our various zip codes.

{1 P 1:1; Eph 1:1; 1 Co 12:27; 2 Co 5:20} Nevertheless, in Christ we are **“God’s elect”!** We are **“God’s holy people”!** We **“are the body of Christ”!** We are **“Christ’s ambassadors,”** the face, voice, hands and feet of God the Son in the world!

Astonishing, isn’t it?! It takes my breath away.

■ Please turn with me to Matthew 5:13a: **“You are the salt of the earth.”**

Who are the **“you”** whom Jesus addresses? For the answer to that we turn back to Matthew 5:1-2: **“Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to**

**him, and he began to teach them”** – them, **“his disciples.”**

{Mt 16:24} A crowd is present but he isn’t talking to them. The plural **“You”** and **“your,”** here in verses 13-16 (and the entire Sermon on the Mount), refers narrowly to the disciples. **“You”** includes those who are responding in faith to Christ’s call to **“deny themselves and take up their cross and follow”** him.

■ **“You”** disciples **“are the salt of the earth.”**

For first-century Palestinian Jews this metaphor was pregnant with meaning.

★ Refrigeration had yet to be invented. But salt draws out moisture, delaying decomposition, so they cured meat and fish with salt to preserve it.

★ Similarly, without antibiotics a cut or abrasion could turn deadly. Salt has antiseptic properties, so they rubbed it into wounds to prevent infection.

{Ro 3:23; 6:23; 1 Jn 3:14} **“You are the salt of the earth”** because while bodily and spiritual death are everywhere (for **“all have sinned”** and **“the wages of sin is death”**), yet by the blood of Jesus we **“have passed from death to life.”** And as new life animates us it slows down spiritual decay in the world around us.

{Jas 5:20} It can even stop the infection of sin, thereby preventing death. Hence James declares, **“Whoever turns a sinner from the way of error will save them from death.”**

We \_ **“are \_ the salt of the earth.”**

★ {Nu 18:19} Scripture speaks of a **“covenant of salt”** between YHWH and his priests. In obedience to

Leviticus 2:13 Jewish priests added salt to every grain offering they made at the temple.

{Rev 5:10; 2 Co 2:15} **“You are the salt of the earth”**

because with his blood the Savior has **“made [us] to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God.”** As Holy God mediated his presence through his priests of old, so he brings his presence to the world through us. **“We are the pleasing aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing.”**

We \_ **“are \_ the salt of the earth.”**

★ Salt induces thirst. Eat a lot of salty food and a thirst-quenching drink becomes nearly irresistible. You can hardly help but reach for a refreshing glass of water.

{Ps 42:1-2; Jn 4:10} **“You are the salt of the earth”**

because the world is thirsty. **“As the deer pants for streams of water, so [they] thirst for God”** even if they don’t realize it – and Messiah has given you his **“living water.”** As they sense his life within you, your neighbors become more aware of their own thirst. Some will be drawn to Jesus.

We \_ **“are \_ the salt of the earth.”**

Messiah does not say you *might* be **“the salt of the earth,”** or you *should* be **“the salt of the earth”**; he says, **“You are the salt of the earth.”** This is our new identity. It is who we are in Christ!

■ That isn’t all. Matthew 5:14a: **“You are the light of the world.”**

★ In Scripture light is a symbol of life.

{Job 33:30, NRSV; Ps 36:9} Job speaks of **“the light of life.”** The Psalmist praises God: **“with you is the**

**fountain of life; in your light we see light.”** In John 1:4 {NLT, TNIV} and we discover that **“life itself was in”** Christ, **“and that life [is] the light of all people.”**

{Gal 2:20; Ro 6:5; 2 Co 4:10; Php 2:15} **“You are the light of the world”** because **“Christ lives in”** all who have **“been united with him in [his] death.”** As we **“carry” “the death of Jesus” “in our body,”** his **“life... [is] also revealed in our body.”** We **“shine like stars... as [we] hold out the word of life.”**

We \_ **“are \_ the light of the world.”**

★ In Scripture light is a symbol of truth and guidance.

{Ps 119:105; 130; 2 P 1:19} **“Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light for my path.”** **“The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding.”** Your message is **“a light shining in a dark place.”**

{Eph 5:8; 2 Co 4:6; Ro 2:19} **“You are the light of the world”** because **“you were once darkness, but now you are light.”** The LORD has **“made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of [his] glory displayed in the face of Christ.”** By his Holy Spirit we can be **“a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark...”**

We \_ **“are \_ the light of the world.”**

★ In Scripture light is a symbol of God’s presence.

{1 Jn 1:5; 1 T 6:15-16; Ps 104:2; Hab 3:4} **“God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.”** **“The King of kings and Lord of lords” “wraps himself in light as with a garment.”** He **“lives in unapproachable light”** and **“his splendor [is] like the sunrise.”**

{Gal 2:20; Eph 2:2; Ro 8:9; 1 Th 5:5} **“You are the light of the world”** because **“Christ lives in”** us. We **“are being built together to become [God’s] dwelling”** place. **“Indeed, [his] Spirit ...lives in”** us for we are **“children of the light”** and his brightness shines through us.

We \_ **“are \_ the light of the world.”**

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{2 Co 5:17} **“If anyone is in Christ...The old has gone, the new is here!”** That newness makes us salt and light.

{Ro 10:13, 9} Have you **“[called] on the name of the Lord”**? **“You are the salt of the earth.”** Do you **“declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead”**? **“You are the light of the world.”**

Let this sink in for a moment.

These words are a great encouragement. All the same, they do not justify complacency.

■ Verse 13: **“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 underfoot.”**

We know how to deliberately desalinate salt, but ancient people did not. Pure salt is remarkably stable. It does not naturally lose its salty qualities.

It follows that the Lord Jesus is not cautioning us against losing our salvation.

On the other hand, looks can be deceiving. Most of the salt used in ancient Israel came from the Dead Sea and was contaminated by other substances. Over time, those substances asserted themselves and the salt gradually lost its saltiness.

Even worse, some first century merchants maximized profits by mixing sand into their salt. This changed the flavor and made the salt useless as a preservative and antiseptic.

The Lord Jesus is warning us not to assume that we are really salt – or to claim that we are – if we lack the qualities of salt. Pure salt is salty.

■ On to verses 14-16:

**“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

The starting point is simple: do not claim to be the light if the light is not shining in you.

Moving on from there if **“you are the light,”** do not hide it. You and I might be the only light our neighbors can see. If so, hiding the light will deprive them of the vision of life, truth and guidance, and the presence of God. Not only so it will rob our Heavenly Father of glory!

I do not want that. Surely, you don't either.

How can we shine brightly before others? How can we be certain we are pure salt?

Remember, the Sermon on the Mount is a portrait of Jesus and an invitation to share his life.

☑ As N.T. Wright puts it, it **“is about discovering the living God in the loving, and dying, Jesus, and learning to reflect that love ourselves into the world....”** To live out any part of the sermon is to think, speak, behave and relate like Jesus.

I cannot be salt on my own. I cannot shine the light by sheer effort. Neither can you.

{Lk 18:27; Php 2:13} The Good News is, we don't have to! **“What is impossible with [us] is possible with God.”**  
**“It is God who works in [us] to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”**

If we seek the Messiah in worship, prayer, Bible study, service, and fellowship we will find him. As we draw near to him, he will draw near to us. His saltiness will rub off on us. His light will shine in and through us.

**“You are the salt of the earth.”**

**“You are the light of the world.”**

Matthew 5:13-16 is the word of the Lord.