

You Are Salt and Light

(Matthew 5:13-16)

Introduction

Last week we finished an 8-week study of *the beatitudes*. We learned that having godly attitudes brings us inner happiness and special rewards.

The beatitudes are just the first part of a big, long teaching that Jesus gave to a huge crowd of people called "*The Sermon on the Mount*." This teaching is recorded for us in Matthew, chapters 5 through 7. He preached this sermon on a hillside so all the people could hear and see Him, that's why it's called *the Sermon on the Mount*. The people were probably all sitting around on the grass while Jesus taught them about what it means to be a citizen of God's kingdom.

Kingdom means "rule" or "reign." When we asked Jesus into our lives and accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord, we became citizens of God's kingdom (Ephesians 2:1-9; Philippians 3:20). Jesus explained that God wants us, as citizens of His kingdom, to live our lives in such a way that we make a positive impact on the people around us so that more people will come to know Him.

Opening Prayer

Lord, You want to use us to bring more people into Your kingdom. So, I pray that You will teach us this morning how to live our lives in such a way that we make a positive impression on our friends and family. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

*"You are the salt of the earth.... You are the light of the world."
(Matthew 5:13-14)*

Lesson

This week we're going to look at Matthew 5:13-16 to find two more marks of a citizen of God's kingdom.

Salt of the Earth

Matthew 5:13

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men."

[Teacher, give everyone a pinch of salt to taste. Discuss what salt is used for.] What is salt? (Salt is a seasoning. You put it on food to make it taste better.)

What do you think Jesus is saying when He calls us the "*salt of the earth*"? He wants us to understand that we are the world's seasoning. He expects us to make life more tasteful for everyone. What do you think that means? How can you season the world?

What are some ways we are like salt?

1. Having positive godly attitudes makes people happy; they like having you around because you are full of joy and that makes them feel good.
2. Being *pure in heart* means that you don't have any bad thoughts about people. Again, people like to be around people that see the good in others.
3. Being *peacemakers* brings tranquility among people.
4. Being *merciful* to people makes people thankful.
5. If you are *hungering and thirsting after righteousness*, you will make the people around you think twice about doing unrighteous things.

This is the kind of influence we need to be on the people around us. We should not let the world influence us; we should influence the world.

Matthew 5:13

"...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 by man."

Jesus is saying that if salt loses its flavor, it has no value. What He means is that in the same way, if Christians make no effort to "season" the world around them, they are of little value to God. If we are too much like the world, we are worthless. We should not blend in with everyone else. Instead, we should affect others positively, just as seasoning brings out the best flavor in food.

Have you ever noticed that when you eat salty things, like potato chips, it makes you really thirsty? Salt creates a big thirst in people. As "*the salt of the earth*", we should be creating spiritual thirst in our friends and neighbors. Has anyone ever asked you about your church or about Jesus? If your friends wonder why you have such godly attitudes, it will be a great way for you to tell them about how wonderful Jesus is and what a big difference He makes in your life.

Here's another thing about salt. Did you know that in the old days, before refrigerators were invented, people would put salt on meat to preserve it. They'd make jerky out of the meat, using salt. Salt is a preservative and like salt, we are to be a purifying influence on the people around us.

What are some ways we can be a purifying influence on the world? [Teacher, lead the children in discussion using the following questions.]

1. If your friends wanted to do a mean trick, what could you do?
2. If your friends wanted to tell you a nasty joke, what could you do?
3. If your friends are fighting, what could you do?

4. If your friends wanted you to do something you know your parents wouldn't approve of, what could you do?

Light of the World

Matthew 5:14

"You are the light of the world..."

Matthew 5:16

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

What do you think Jesus is saying here? [Teacher, light a candle. Talk about the attributes of light.] Jesus wants us to "*shine as lights*" by doing works that will turn the attention of others to God.

Verse 14 goes on to say,

"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden."

Can you hide a city that is sitting on top of a hill? (No! Its light at night can be seen for miles.) If we live for Christ, we will glow like lights, showing others what Jesus is like. The Scripture is telling us that, we are the world's light — like a city on a hill, glowing in the night for all to see.

Notice what it says about the lights.

Matthew 5:15

Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

People don't light a lamp and then put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, we should not hide our light! Instead, we should let it shine for all to see so that they will praise your Heavenly Father. [Teacher, put a glass bowl over the candle.]

What are some ways we hide our light?

1. Going along with the crowd, even when we know that God wouldn't approve
2. Letting sin dim our light
3. Denying the light; denying that we are Christians
4. Being quiet when we should speak up about Jesus
5. Not explaining our light to others; not telling others about how wonderful Jesus is
6. Ignoring the needs of others

We need to be a beacon of truth — don't shut your light off from the rest of the world.

[Teacher, discuss what happened to the burning candle when you placed it under the bowl.]

Closing Prayer

Lord, we want to be the *salt of the earth* and the *light of the world*. We want to make life more tasteful for everyone. And we want our lives to show people the right way to live. Help us to keep having godly attitudes so that others will know that we are Christians and will want to know You better. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Learning Activities

Craft Corner

Game Center

Make the following review questions into a game. Number the children, then use a spinner to see who will be the questioner. Spin again to see who will be the responder. Individually cut out the questions (without the answers!) and place them in a bowl.

Or, use the following questions in another game of your choice:

Review questions:

1. What is the section of Scripture called from Matthew chapters 5 through 7? (The Sermon on the Mount)
2. Why is it called *the Sermon on the Mount*? (Because Jesus preached this sermon on a hillside)
3. What is the first part of the Sermon on the Mount called? (The beatitudes)
4. What do the beatitudes teach us? (If we have godly attitudes we will have inner happiness and special rewards from God)
5. What are two things Jesus said every Christian should be like? (Salt and light)
6. What did Jesus mean when He said we are to be the salt of the earth? (We are to act like seasoning, making life more tasteful to people)
7. Tell us a way you can be like a seasoning, making people's lives more tasteful. (Having a positive Godly attitude, being pure in heart, being a peacemaker, being merciful, etc.)

8. What makes us lose our saltiness? (Letting the world influence us; acting in ungodly ways)
9. Salt makes people thirsty. Has your life ever created spiritual thirst in someone else? Has anyone ever admired your godly attitudes and asked you about why you're so nice?
10. Salt is a preservative. How can we help purify the world? (We can stop our friends from fighting. We cannot join in when our friends want to do a mean trick to someone.)
11. What did Jesus mean when He said we are to be *the light of the world*? (If we live for Christ, we will glow like light, showing others what Jesus is like. The world is a dark place and He wants us to show people the right way to live, like a flashlight in the dark.)
12. Jesus doesn't want us to put our light under a bowl. What are some ways we hide our light? (Going along with the crowd and doing wrong things; not admitting that we are Christians; not telling people about Jesus)
13. What is a way we can be lights to the world? (Be good and want to do the right things to please God. Praise God so people's attention is turned towards God.)
14. What happens if we hide our light? What happened to the candle under the bowl? (Our light for God will grow dim and go out.)

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