

Salt and Light

The sermon on the mount – Jesus was preaching and teaching, on a mountain plateau, to his disciples. It started last week when we heard what **God and God’s kingdom actively blesses**. When Jesus came to be baptized he said, “the kingdom of God has come near.”

What does that mean?

What does that look like? For those of us wanting to be disciples – followers, Jesus is laying out a plan. God is seeking to **transform our lives**. God wants to make us **the kind of flavor people cant live without, glowing with light** for others to see, and so *right with God* that other people are drawn to God. That is what today is about – the inner life of the Christian, and therefore outer transformations God wants to work in each of us. How we live our life matters. The world is getting **wackier** by the minute. And you don’t need or want me to be political, but my hope is **that God can use me to influence people** on both sides to **seek what lines up with the Gospel – with Jesus’ teaching.** How is how the way we are living, when we walk out of the church influenced by our faith in Christ?

When Jesus was speaking the **temple in Jerusalem** was gone, groups within the faith community had different ideas about the **future of Judaism**, and they were often in conflict with each other. The **present was unstable**, and the **future seemed uncertain**.

Not that different from now. The **norm is shifting** and more than ever we need to be reminded of what Jesus was saying about right living. As I prepared for Leona’s funeral yesterday – I was struck that she was just a **“salt of the earth”** kind of person. Her life was the kind Jesus was teaching about. He was describing the **kingdom of God**. Not a castle with a moat and peaked roofs, but a way of living where the intentions of people’s heart are good even if they aren’t perfect.

People of faith. A disciple is not different than anyone else, but ideally, when you begin to **spend time with “one”** you see that they are totally different than anyone else. God’s grace has gotten a hold of them and there is a **new set of rules – a value system that leads with grace and love**. **God changes us.** If you knew them before you might find that they aren’t the same person they use to be. If your job or neighborhood has

brought you close to a disciple living for Christ, you will experience something extraordinary.

It is important that being a disciple sets you apart from other people who don't profess to be, because our **God is distinctly different from anything that people would find in the world.** I bet many of you saw that news clip or facebook post of that teacher that had a special handshake with each student in his class. That's what a disciple looks like.

So here Jesus is, sitting on the side of a mountain – teaching the disciples. He knew that their lives would be forever changed and he wanted to describe what life might look like for someone united **with God through the power of the Holy Spirit by faith.**

I look out at a group of people and I just want to affirm for you, that you are **unique and distinct** from the world. Not better. Not set above. Distinct – holy. Because you are **united with Christ**, God lives in you – through the power of the Holy Spirit, the way you live is **noteworthy**. Jesus begins to tell them what that **unique disciple, living a holy life** looks like:

You are the **salt of the earth**. You are the **light of the world**. Not you **should be** salt or light. You are. By saying this, Jesus is making a statement about what the world needs.

Salt was used for **preservation in biblical times**. It kept meat from spoiling. It is hard for us to imagine, because we just go to the frig and get out Superbowl food out, but back in the day – salt kept things from decay. It was also **symbolic of purity** – it came from the sun and the sea, it glistened white. Purity. Honesty. Godly values. We are to be the salt of the earth, to do everything we can to be right with God and others. The **world needs to be salted**.

And light ...the world can be dark and it is in need of light. In the day, a typical Palestinian house had one little 18 inch round window. The lamp was like sauce boat with a wick floating in it. It was **hard to light** – there were no matches. Once you lit it – you wanted to keep it lit. It was usually kept on a lamp stand, but if people went outside – for safety's sake, they **took the lamp**. So that the wick didn't get blown out – they would put it under an **earthen bushel measure**. So singing, "Hide it under a bushel –no!" would have been an easy visual for them. Jesus was saying, **when you are a Christian – a disciple of Jesus Christ – your light just needs to be full out, always on.**

Our light is to help others see – see the God who has changed our life. Our light is to guide – help neighbors, co-workers, siblings to stay on a path of right living. Our light is to warn.

Our light sees someone not in the circle and invites them in.
Our light recognizes someone new in church and greets them warmly.
Our light knows when a co-worker is having an off day – and cares.
Our light has a different opinion than the rest around the lunch table,
and prays for an opening to speak a different way.

As Jesus begins talking with this first group who will **become the church** it becomes clear that the **purpose of the church is to be in the world**. Grace church is a lighthouse, a missionary outpost. We want it to be said that Grace church flavors the city of Rockford – that we make a difference. But a lighthouse can't get to the **nooks and crannies** – a lighthouse still casts shadows. So we come to church to be taught - then we are sent out to display and declare to the world who God is...and we **do that by how we live**.

Our Cub Scouts are learning how to work together – live together. They are learning how to be good citizens and to be boys of character. Pack 206 we are **committed to praying for you and your families**. You are doing great things. Our **world needs strong leaders** – and you are both today's and tomorrow's leaders. Our prayer for you is that you would **seek God your whole life – and that is how you might learn to lead**.

Church. You are to **flavor a bland world with your light of kindness to shine**. Not with a gregarious personality – but a sincere, **godly care for others** – one motivated by the love of God you have received. You are to reflect a way of living that is driven by joy –

that makes this thing we do ,
this doing church,
this discipleship

so attractive to others that they can't wait to ask you, “What makes you different?” I want that peace. I want to know the Jesus that has changed your life.

Be the salt. Be the light. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen