



# The Trinity Pulpit



## Be Who You Are Matthew 5:13-16

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As Christians, we live in a paradoxical world. The life of a follower of Christ is one of many paradoxes:

- Successful enough to fail
- Busy enough to take time
- Wise enough to say “I don’t know”
- Rich enough to be poor
- Right enough to say “I’m wrong”
- Compassionate enough to discipline
- Careful enough to give freely
- Mature enough to be childlike
- Important enough to be last
- Free enough to endure captivity
- Knowledgeable enough to ask questions
- Great enough to be nameless
- Assured enough to be rejected
- Stable enough to cry
- Victorious enough to lose
- Leading enough to serve


So much about Jesus is also paradoxical:

- He had no servants but was called Master
- He wasn’t a doctor but was a healer
- He wasn’t trained by the philosophers of the day but yet was called “Teacher”
- He never picked up a sword or had an army, yet He was feared by the rulers of the day and yet He changed the world
- He never committed a crime but died for the sins of the world.
- He died yet He lives.

As followers of Jesus, we are aliens traveling through this life – we are in this world but not

of it so we live by a different system than the world. We are called to usher in the Kingdom of God into a world that is hostile toward the one we worship and follow.

Over the past eight weeks, we have been studying the paradoxical ways of Christ. The beatitudes are in direct conflict of what the world accepts as the norm. The world teaches to always do for yourself because no one but you has your best interest in mind. “Be your own advocate and get what you want, when you can get it, no matter who you step on along the way.” We live in a “me-centered” world. However, the beatitudes teach the paradoxical ways: long for what is not readily available, ache for the right relationships, work to bring the peace of God to others, seek hope in mercy, and hunger and thirst for righteousness. These teachings of Christ are all about bringing the Kingdom of God to a world that rejected him. Jesus warned it would not be easy, as the world will insult, persecute, and falsely say all kinds of evil against his followers.



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So, why? Why do we have to live this life? Why can’t we be with Jesus in the Kingdom of Heaven? The answer is found in today’s text. Jesus said we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Jesus didn’t say “You should be the salt and light.” Jesus didn’t say “You must work to be the salt and light.” He didn’t say “You have the option of being the salt and light.” Jesus said “You

ARE the salt of the earth and the light of the world!” This is our purpose. This is why we are still on this earth.

We have been reminded this week that we live in a broken world. When a father takes the lives of his entire family and then turns the gun on himself, shattering a picture-perfect family, we are reminded of the world’s brokenness. When our servicemen and women are attacked by one of our own on our own base, we are reminded of the world’s brokenness. When a former employee comes back to the office and opens fire, killing one and wounding five, we are reminded of the world’s brokenness. This world is broken. It is filled with sin that separates us from our Lord. Our world is literally dying to know the hope we have in Jesus. Jesus said “You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world!”

Being called the salt of the earth had great significance in the ancient times. In the ancient world, salt was highly valued. You couldn’t just walk into the local grocery store and just pick up a 5 lb. bag – it was a precious commodity at the time. Thus, Jesus calling his disciples the salt of the earth placed a high value on their worth. Jesus was preparing his followers for what was to come. Jesus understood his mission. In just a few short years, he knew he would not be around to lead and guide his disciples. Jesus chose this rag-tag group of men to be the ones to carry the message of the Gospel to the Jews and Gentiles. They were a precious commodity to Jesus then, just as we are a precious commodity to him today. God has placed the ultimate value on us, proven through the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Jesus calls us, me and you, the salt of the earth.

Not only was salt highly valued but it was also connected to purity. Its crystal-white color signified its purity in the ancient times. Since Christians are the salt of the earth, we are to be an example of purity to the world. We are to have purity in our character and in our standards. When it seems everyone around us is looking for the shortcut to success, we must protect our character and live up to the high standards of Jesus. Honesty is still an important trait. Conscientiousness and diligence in work are still the standards to live by. Moral purity has NOT

been cast aside in our Christian faith. We are to be examples of purity in speech, thought and conduct. Whether you are part of the modern generation or the postmodern generation, our character and standards have not changed and should not be compromised.

Another attribute of salt is that it preserves what is good. Just as salt preserves food from spoiling, Christians are to preserve what is good from turning bad. We are to preserve love and justice in our world. Christians are to preserve peace and goodness whenever possible. We are to uphold what is right while holding off the decay of the world’s greed, lust and apathy.

As the salt of the earth, we are to preserve the good in the people around us. We are to be the person who is easy to keep the godly standards when others are around us. You know these people...you are at your best when you are around them and these special people bring out the best in you. On the flip side, you also know the ones that bring out the worst in you. It is easy to fall into temptation when you are around those who drag you down rather than lift you up. Salt preserves what is good in life and repels the decay. As salt of the earth we are preservatives.

Finally, salt flavors. Just as salt flavors our food, we are to flavor those around us. We are to flavor others with the peace and joy of Christ. Many in the world see Christianity as a list of dos and don’ts. The world points to all of the “thou shall not’s” and labels Christianity as a drag. To be honest, many Christians live down to this low view of Christianity. Their joy and excitement have been drained by the stress of life. They go around with sadness and despair as if they had nothing to hope for. On the contrary, Christians are to be the life of the party. We are to overflow with joy and peace that surpasses all knowledge. We are to attract the world to the hope we have in Christ and flavor the world with our abundant lives!

In addition to being the salt of the earth, Christ called us the light of the world. He didn’t say we are to be the light of the world. He just said we are the light of the world.

In the world of physics, light has been studied in great detail. There are two main theories when it comes to light. Max Plank, a physicist, came up with the Quantum Theory which states that light is a steady stream of high-speed particles and that all light sources send out a stream of these particles known as photons. Christiann Huygens and Thomas Young are credited with introducing the Wave Motion Theory which explains the laws of reflection, refraction, diffraction and polarization. Depending on the wavelength, speed, frequency and the medium it passes through, light will take on these different characteristics.

Let's focus on the reflective characteristic of light. Reflection occurs when light strikes an object and bounces off its surface. When the surface is smooth and polished, the reflection is orderly, meaning the light reflects at the same angle to the surface as the incoming light. When a surface is irregular, light reflects irregularly and diffuses reflecting light in different directions. Practically speaking most surfaces are irregular, therefore reflecting diffused light.

As followers of Jesus, we are a reflection of Christ in our lives. We are not the source of this light that we shine for; Christ is the source of light in the purest form. We are simply the irregular surface in which the light of Christ is reflected and diffused to the world, bringing light into darkness.

Light is meant to be seen. That is the purpose of light. As Jesus said, people do not light lamps to put it under a bowl to hide the light. Rather, it is put on a stand in order for it to give light to everyone who is near it. Being the light that reflects Christ, we cannot live out our lives in secret. Our faith must be personal but our life of discipleship should be public. We shine our light to the world in our day-to-day encounters. How we treat the clerk at the gas station or the waiter in the restaurant reflects our light of discipleship. The way we

treat our employees or the way we work for our employer reflects our light of discipleship. The attitude we show in the basketball game and even the way we drive on the highway are reflections of our light of discipleship. As Christians, we are a light wherever we go.

Light also serves as a guide. It illumines what is right, what is good, what is just and what is true. As light of the world, this also is our calling. We are to serve as guides to what is good in the world.

As the light, we are to make the way clear.

Many of you have flown during the night. Ever wonder how the pilots know where to land the plane in the darkness of night? Maybe you have noticed the majestic sight of the airport runways lit up by small lights, guiding the pilots and making the way clear. It is a breath-taking sight the first time you see it. But imagine if there were no lights on these runways? How would the pilot know where to land the plane? In the great Northeast Blackout of 2003, planes flying into the affected cities had to be diverted to other areas of our nation because there were no lights to guide them to a safe landing.

In the same way, as the light of the world, we are to shine the light of

Christ on all that is good, making the way of goodness clear to the world. We are to shine the light on what is good by assisting the poor, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and providing shelter to the homeless. We need to bring clarity to injustices in our community and work to make it right. We need to guide others to the source of our light, Jesus Christ, in all we do.

Likewise, light also serves as a warning sign. Light illumines the dangers ahead. Sometimes, it is the Christian's duty to warn others about the pitfalls lying ahead. Often this is a difficult task that is rejected by many.



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Parents play the role of the warning light to their children, often falling on deaf ears.

“Don’t touch the stove. It’s hot!” “Ouch mommy, I burned my hand!”

“Be careful who you hang around with at school. They may drag you down with them.” “Mom and dad, I’m sorry for being so stupid and getting suspended from school. I thought they were my friends.”

The North Carolina coastline extends over 300 miles. Across the coastline, many of you have visited the beautiful lighthouses that serve as historical landmarks. The North Carolina beaches are mostly flat, with few mountains or other high, natural landmarks for mariners to use to navigate their vessels. Thus, the treacherous waters, shoals, numerous inlets and "sounds" made it necessary to construct these lighthouses on the North Carolina coast at several prominent ports. Without these lighthouses serving as a warning light, many ships and vessels would find peril in the treacherous waters off the North Carolina coast.

We sometimes are called to be the lighthouses or the warning light to the people around us. It is not a role any of us get excited about. However, if our warnings are given, not in anger, not in irritation, not in criticism, not in condemnation, not in the desire to hurt, but in love, they will be effective.

So let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Our good deeds are not to bring glory onto

ourselves; we are to reflect the goodness of God so that others may know salvation through Christ Jesus our Lord. In all we do, we are to point others to the hope and sacrifice symbolized in the cross.

Origen, an early father of the Christian church, testified that “the lives lived by the early Christians were their invincible witness; for people might have argued against a creed, but could not deny a creed that was lived out in courage, love and joy. Furthermore, there is a deeper purpose than any service to others: the light is to shine as an act of the worship of God.”

Paul says in Romans 12:1, “Therefore, I urge you, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”

We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. As the salt and light, we bring life to the beatitudes. We usher in the kingdom of God, little by little, each time we live out the teachings of Christ:

- Being poor in spirit
- Mourning for the world
- Passing off our earthly power in our meekness
- Hungering and thirsting for righteousness
- Being merciful because we have been shown mercy
- Acting with purity of heart
- Bringing about peace in the world
- Standing tall in the face of persecution.

So go and **BE WHO YOU ARE!** The salt of the earth and light of the world. The kingdom of God is counting on you! ❁



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