

OUT OF THE SALTSHAKER & INTO THE WORLD

Jeremiah 31:31-37; Matthew 5:13-20

Theme of Matthew: "Behold your King is coming to you" (Zech.9:9-11; Mt.21:4-5)

Theme of the Beatitudes: Christ's Portrait of His People (John Stott)

Theme of the Sermon on the Mount: Life Styles of the Rich and Famous

INTRODUCTION TO JEREMIAH 31:31-37

"I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it..."

- ✓ Jeremiah is contrasting where the Law was placed in the Old Covenant system and where it would be placed in the New Covenant.
- ✓ Today, the law is no longer written on stone tablets and stored in the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies, but in the Temple of His people.

I. YOU ARE THE SALT AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD (Matthew 5:13-16)

- ✓ Being called "salt" by Jesus is a great compliment!
- ✓ Salt was as important a commodity in the time of Jesus as oil is for us today.
- ✓ The Latin phrase "salarium argentum," "salt money," referred to part of the payment made to every Roman soldier, and the word has been carried down the ages into the English word "salary".
- ✓ Saying that we are the light of the world is like saying "You are the electricity of the earth."
- ✓ Pliny (A.D. 23–79), the Roman naturalist, had a saying; "There is nothing more beneficial than sun and salt."
 - A. Jesus calls His disciples the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" because we are poor in spirit, we mourn, we are gentle/meek, we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we are merciful, we are pure in heart, and we are peacemakers!

1 Peter 2:12

Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Did you know?

There are more than thirty references to salt in the Bible.

B. Jesus calls His disciples the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" because Christianity is the best thing the world has going for it – even though the world doesn't and won't realize this!

II. IF THE SALT HAS BECOME TASTELESS, HOW CAN IT BE MADE SALTY AGAIN? IT IS NO LONGER GOOD FOR ANYTHING, EXCEPT TO BE THROWN OUT AND TRAMPLED UNDER FOOT BY MEN (Matthew 5:13)

- A. The debate over gay marriage is a result of the church in general having lost her saltiness.
- B. Your employer may make you work on the Sabbath day because the church has effectively "annulled" the Fourth Commandment and she has taught others to do the same (Matthew 5:19; cf. Matthew 28:18-20).
- C. Once the church drops the ball on God's commandments/righteousness, she loses her saltiness and society begins to decay.
- D. Our nation is becoming increasingly lawless because the majority of evangelicals today reject the abiding significance of the Ten Commandments.

"Marriage has been undermined by divorce, so don't tell me about marriage."

-Chicago Mayor Richard Daley
(*World on the Web* 2/28/04)

III. JESUS, THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS (Matthew 5:17-20)

- A. "I did not come to abolish but to *fulfill*" (v.17).
 1. The word *fulfill* is contrasted with the word *abolish* and *annul* (vv.17,19)
 2. The word "fulfill" is often enough in Matthew's Gospel with the sense of confirmation and the sense that Jesus is the goal or the focal point of the Old Testament (Matthew 1:22; 2:15,17; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54,56; 27:9; cf. Romans 10:4).
- B. Jesus/Moses/Prophets versus the scribes and Pharisees (vv.17,20).

"Christ is saying nothing in this Sermon about how we become Christians, but only about the works and fruit that no one can do unless he already is a Christian and in a state of grace" (Martin Luther).

C. There are three major differences between Jesus and Moses.

1. Moses spoke about Jesus and Jesus fulfilled what Moses spoke (Matthew 11:28-30; 12:6; 21:42; cf. Deut.18:15,18).
2. The second difference is that in the time of Moses, the law was written on tablets of stone and kept in the Ark of the Covenant. In the New Covenant the law is now written on the hearts of God's people (Jeremiah 31:31-37).
3. In the Old Testament the ceremonial laws separated the Jews from the Gentiles: laws concerning clean and unclean foods, purity and purification laws, laws concerning dress, etc. (Lev.20:24-26). Moses commissioned the people to enter into the small geographical area of the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 31:23-33:29). Jesus commissioned His disciples to go to the ends of the earth (Matthew 28:18-20; **Isaiah 51:4**).

Matthew 5:19

“Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and **teaches others** to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but **whoever keeps and teaches them**, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 28:19-20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

IV. BEING THE SALT AND LIGHT OF THE WORLD MEANS THAT WE LIVE RIGHTEOUS LIVES

A. One of the mistakes many Christians make is to define “righteousness” only in terms of what Jesus has done for us. But the righteousness Jesus is speaking about in the Sermon on the Mount has to do with Christian character and conduct (cf. Gen 18:19; Lev.19:36; **Deut.6:25 with Matt.4:4,7,10**; Isa.5:16; Psalm 1:4–6; Rom.14:17; 2 Cor.9:10; Gal.5:5; Phil.1:11).

- Righteousness is obedience to the smallest letter and stroke of the law (vv.17-19).
- Righteousness is not having a heart of anger toward our brother (vv.21-26).
- Righteousness is not lusting in our hearts (vv.27-30).
- Righteousness pertains to marriage (vv.31-32).
- Righteousness pertains to our yes being yes and our no being no (vv.33-37).
- Righteousness means we do not take revenge (vv.38-42).
- Righteousness means we love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (vv.43-48).
- Righteousness includes giving to the poor (Mt.6:3), praying (Mt.6:5-13), fasting (Mt.6:16-18), and storing up for ourselves treasures in heaven (Mt.6:19-24).

“He who is born of God is certain to resemble his father”
-unknown

B. Every Christian has been saved by grace alone, but grace is never alone! (Ephesians 2:8-10)

“Faith, thus receiving and resting on Christ and His righteousness, is the alone instrument of justification: (John 1:12, Rom. 3:28, Rom. 5:1) yet is it not alone in the person justified, but is ever accompanied with all other saving graces, and is no dead faith, but worketh by love. (James 2:17,22,26, Gal. 5:6)” (Westminster Confession of Faith 11:2).

Matthew 5:20 (cf. Matthew 13:43, 49; 25:46)

“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

John 3:3,5

3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

5 Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

QUESTIONS FOR SABBATH DISCUSSION & MEDITATION:

Take what you have learned this morning and make it into a prayer. Confess any areas of your life that are “unsalty”.

What is the significance of Jesus calling His disciples the salt and light of the world?

How does salt lose its saltiness?

What is righteousness?

