

How Can a Christian Impact the Government?

Matthew 5:13-16

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, October 8, 2023

Good morning, everyone. If you would, please open your Bibles to the Gospel of Matthew. That's where we're going to be looking this morning in Matthew chapter five because we're almost at the end of this series on the government. I say, "almost" I don't know if that's a relief or a sadness for you, but I've enjoyed thinking through these things together with you; they're very important to consider in the life of our church. But this is our second to last sermon in this series of messages. And today, we want to answer the question, how can a Christian impact the government? We've said before, that the church and the government are separate. And the Bible tells us they're not the same. We are to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to render to God the things that are God's, which means that Caesar is not God. He doesn't rule over everything. But it raises an issue, does that mean the church should have nothing to do with the government anymore? Does that imply that we should just mind our own business and tend our own things? And just leave them alone completely? And I would say, I don't think so. And here's why. If you look in Matthew 5:13, let me just read these words to you from our Lord Jesus. And we'll talk about them a little bit. We just read them in Scripture reading, but just to bring them to your mind again, the Lord said,

"You are the salt of the earth; but 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.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

I think those are words that many of us are familiar with. If you've grown up in church before, have some Christian background, you've studied them at some point in your life. But just to give you some background for this, the Gospel of Matthew has been called the gospel of the kingdom. Because the word "kingdom" is repeated 50 times or so in this book; that's almost twice per chapter, you see it all over the place. Because Matthew tells us that the King has come. That's the message of the gospel, the Saviour has arrived, the Lord has appeared. And so you don't have to look for Him anymore. You don't have to hope that He might arrive to save you from your sins. He has already done that. Now you need to look to Christ and believe.

And as you do that Matthew five tells you in the context of this, this is what the King wants you to do as his subjects. We're talking about the government, we're talking about kings, we're talking about rulers. This is what the ultimate ruler wants you to do as his disciple. He wants you to be salt. He doesn't want

you to become salt; you already are salt. He's not asking you to change who you are in order to apply this and make it happen. It happened the moment you put your faith in Him; He just wants you to act like it now. There's nothing more unnatural on this entire planet than a Christian that's not salty. There's nothing more strange than a believer who doesn't stick out; you're supposed to stick out. If you wonder, "Why don't I fit in in this world?" This is why. You're not supposed to.

If you notice the verse also says, "You are the salt of the earth." Now that means this is where your salt needs to be felt, and that is on the earth. And this is where your testimony needs to be tasted and that's in the world, the culture and in the government. In other words, it doesn't just need to be tasted in heaven. It needs to be tasted down here. And you don't just need to have a witness in church and at care group and at Bible study when you're surrounded by Christians and visiting with Christians and hanging out with Christians and doing things with Christians. You're supposed to do it when you're out there with those lost people. That's convicting, isn't it? I mean, the way this works is that if you go to work, you're supposed to be salt work. And if you go to the store you needed to be the salt at the store. And if you go to the bank, you need to be salty at the bank. And if you go to the office, you need to be salty at the office. And if you go to the playground to watch your kids, you get a pass there because it's hard. No, no. You need to spread the salt there and share the light of Christ in that dark place. There's just no exceptions to this.

It says, "Let your light shine before men," and the word "men," there's no qualifications there. There's no exceptions to it; you do this in a way that they may see you. And that means Christ saved you and forgave you and made you part of His kingdom, so you can be seen. The whole reason He did this is so people can watch you.

But I think it goes without saying, as you read this, that that can't happen if you crawl under a hole and hide. And you can't do what the Lord is saying here if you as a church, and you as a Christian, go run away and live in a cave somewhere. You got to put yourself out there for people to notice. I mention that because I am afraid people are forgetting this today. And as you talk about the government, and you talk about the culture, and you mentioned how bad it is, and I think a lot of people, they don't want to have anything to do with the world anymore because it scares them because the Liberals are taking over. And the LGBTQ people are running the show. And what it's done is it's made them develop a hunker down mentality. And they're acting like they're under siege. And then I get that I really do. But when you look at this passage, it makes you wonder what would Jesus say about that? I think He would say you've got it backwards. And if you start hunkering down and hiding and living like you're under siege, that's the wrong way to look at this. You're not here to be safe in the world. You're here to be salt, amen? And God did not place you on this earth in order to be comfortable and hide, you're here to reach the lost. And so when there's lost people around you, instead of scaring you, it should make you kind of rub your hands together and say, "Oh, boy, goody, goody, they're here. Let me give them some Christ, some salt."

If there's anything missing in our churches today, I think it's a sense of awareness for this. There are a lot of Christians who don't have any sympathy at all for the lost world. It's almost like the way they talk, they hate them. They say, "If they liked the devil, so much, let the devil have them. And if they want to go to hell so badly, let them just go to hell. I mean, just look at them. They're not worth saving." Can you imagine if Jesus said that about you? He showed mercy to people; He gave them grace. And the least we could do as a church is return the favor. Listen, you can't approach the government with a sense of hatred in your heart toward them. And you can't approach the culture, the lost evil wicked culture with the feeling of anger. You can be angry toward their sin, and you can be angry toward the evil; there's an appropriateness to that. But for the people, you need to have love toward them. That's what Christ did. I'm putting this in here toward the end of our series to balance it with all we're talking about. So let's look at it this way.

This morning, I want to give you five ways you can impact the government in this passage. So if you're taking notes, this is our outline for today. But in Matthew 5:13-16, we're going to look at five ways to impact the government. And we're going to do this by looking at what the Lord says about salt and light, and considering what this means. We have talked about this passage before in the life of our church, but I think it's so important, we need to do it again here.

Let me give you the first way to impact the government; the first one is to be the salt of the earth. We're going to get all these straight from the text, but the first way to impact the government or the culture, we're going to talk about government and culture kind of together this morning, is to be the salt of the earth, which means you're here to help disinfect it.

Salt does a lot of things, but one thing it does is it disinfects things and sterilizes them. You put salt in a wound and it makes you say, "ouch!" You are here to make the culture say, "ouch!" That's the impact you should have.

And I've already said a little bit about why Matthew wrote this gospel, but I didn't tell you that as he writes the Gospel of Matthew, he gives you three sermons on the subject of the kingdom. Just to give you some context here. The first one is the Sermon on the Mount that's in chapter five, and it's on the law of the kingdom. It talks about the conduct, or the way Jesus wants you to live if you're under His kingdom and authority now. And then the second sermon he gives is the parables of the kingdom in Matthew 13. That's where you read through the Gospel of Matthew, and you come to where it says the kingdom of God is like this. And the kingdom of God is like that. It's like a sower, and a mustard seed, and a treasure that a man found in the field. The third sermon is called the Olivet Discourse that talks about the establishment of Christ's kingdom; that happens in Matthew 24. And it tells you what will take place when the King returns, and He sets up His reign upon the earth. But it all begins with what you see here in chapter five. This is the first of those three amazing sermons, and it's called the Sermon on the Mount. It gets its name from Matthew 5:1 because there it says, "When Jesus saw the crowds, He went

up on the mountain.” Now, we don't know what mountain that's referring to because it doesn't say, but in chapter 4:23, it says that Jesus was going throughout Galilee, so it's probably a mountain located there.

If you were to visit the Sea of Galilee today, you would find that on a couple sides of it, there are hills that stand over a thousand feet high; they almost come straight off the ground. That's the reason why, if you're on the Sea of Galilee, a storm could come up just out of nowhere, because the winds would sweep straight down off of those very tall cliffs. And the ancients refer to them as mountains. And this could have been where the sermon was taking place. It was a very ideal location to preach from. You could look all around and see the surrounding landscape. And as these people come to hear the Lord preach in a location like that somewhere on a mountain, Jesus says these words to them that we're considering today: “You are the salt of the earth.”

Now, what does that mean? What's He talking about here? Well, the word “salt” is the Greek word. *alas* means everything the English word salt means and even more. Salt had a very important role in the ancient world. It was used for a lot of different things. For example, they would use it in cooking like we do to flavour our food, they put a little spice in it; some of you use probably too much salt, I do. Nothing tastes good until there's salt in it. My wife will tell me, “There's already salt in that food.” I say, “I know,” you know, and put more in there. They did the same thing. They would also use it in butchering to make the meat last longer because they didn't have refrigeration back then. So if they wanted to preserve it, they would put salt all over it and hang it up in a barn or something like that. My relatives in Tennessee did the same thing. They would slaughter a hog, put it up in the winter with salt all over it to keep it lasting longer. They would use it in medicine because they understood salt had antiseptic qualities to it. It could be a disinfectant for a wound and a sore. Or they would use it as an herbicide to help a farmer kill weeds in the field because anytime he wanted to do that, he would put salt in there; that would take care of the problem. And we could go on and on, but the point is that salt was used in everything; there was no end to what it could do in this time in history. In fact, the ancient people treasured salt so much that the Romans believed it was one of the greatest things on earth next to the sun. They paid their soldiers in salt. Because salt was so precious, a soldier could take a bag of salt to the market and use it like money to exchange it for goods and services.

With that in mind, let me read the phrase again, because it does shed light on what this would mean to them. Jesus says, “You are the salt of the earth.” Now that means you're the ones that give flavor to the earth. You're the ones that put spice in it. Before you the earth is mundane and boring and dry and dull, spiritually speaking; you're here to make sure the culture has something of the taste of God in its mouth. It also means you're here to preserve the culture as well, just like the meat would be hung up in a barn with salt all over it to keep it lasting longer and keep it from going down the tubes so to speak. That's what your life does in this world. You're also here to give healing to the world and serve as a medicine of sorts by telling them the gospel and bringing hope to the wounded soul. But Jesus says all this in order to tell you, this is not someone else's job, this is your job. And this is not someone else's role to be

all those different things in the world. That's what God put you on this earth to do, as a Christian, as the church, as the body of Christ.

In fact, the word “you” in verse 13, is plural. That means all of you, as we would say, in Tennessee, y'all, you all everybody. If you're listening to the sermon, and you believe in Christ, you are responsible for this. This is not just for the pastors and elders. This is not just for the missionaries and evangelists. This is not just for those who are apologists and have a gift for debate in that type of thing. This is for everybody. The word “you” is also emphatic. So it's like Jesus is saying, “*You* are the salt.” *You* are the ones that make a difference, not just the politicians, or those in the halls of government.

It's important to say this, because you hear Christians say today that things are so bad right now and they're so messed up because of the government. And that's true. I don't think anybody could deny that. You could see the decisions they've made and the repercussions; it's had terrible effects on our country. Other countries as well are going through the same thing. But the truth is that they're not the ones Jesus is talking to here and pointing a finger at to fix it. He's pointing it at the church. This is a spiritual problem; it needs spiritual resources to deal with it. And we're the ones that have that.

You know, if the past 200 years have taught us anything in North America, it is that you can't just put a new guy in office and expect him to change everything, it doesn't work. He may change some things, but not everything. And you can't put a new guy in Washington or a new guy in Ottawa and think he'll fix the world. It just doesn't happen like that. It wasn't that long ago that we voted a new guy into office in the U.S. as president. And he ran on the platform of change. I have jokes about that; I'm showing self-control and moving on. And then when his term was up, we voted in another guy who made a promise to make America great again, that was his platform. You know what happened? Both of them failed miserably. Because America didn't change that much. And it's still not as great as it used to be. And that's okay, as a Christian, because we don't put our hope in those things. And that's not where our treasure is. But the point is that it's going to take much more than that to help the country. Listen, Canada won't change, or the US won't change until the government changes, and the government won't change until the voters change, and the voters won't change until the people change, and the people won't change until their hearts change, and that won't happen until the church changes and preaches the gospel to them again. It goes back to us.

You want a good example of this and how the Lord chose to preserve things in history through salt, and through the church being salt. You know, when you look at the history of the U.S., you can see if it were not for God's mercy, that country would have torn itself apart a long time ago. And what I mean is, and we talked about this a couple of weeks ago, but when the Revolutionary War happened, do you remember what was happening simultaneously to keep the colonists united? The Great Awakening. You won't read about that in your history books. I never heard about that until I was in my mid-20s. But it was said more people could recognize the face of George Whitfield, the evangelist than the face of George Washington, the president, because the whole world was turned upside down by the gospel in

the colonies. Thousands of people were being converted, and it kept the country from just ripping itself apart.

Then when the Civil War happened in the U.S. at that time, do you remember what was happening in order to hold it together then? It was the Second Great Awakening. More souls were being saved under the influence of other preachers.

Then during World War One there was another revival in the States.

Then during World War Two, there was another revival than during the Vietnam War, you saw another one when hippies were being saved. Can you believe that? The Jesus Movement was underway, it had some bad things to it, but there were true conversions.

That's how God preserves nations. That's how He keeps them from going downward. He doesn't change politics first. He changes the people through the ministry of the church. You hear so many people complaining about the church nowadays, don't you? And I don't mean people in the church, you hear a lot of people outside the church saying that this place is full of nothing but hypocrites; it would be good if they just closed the doors. Do you know what would happen in Canada, if you shut the doors of all the churches? It would be total chaos. All the salt would go out of it. It would be nothing but darkness from West Coast to East Coast. You don't want to do that.

And it brings us to another way that we can impact the government today, and that is to remember not to become tasteless. The first one is to remember that you are the salt of the earth. Second one, and we're just following along in this passage is to remember not to become tasteless, which means you want to remember not to lose your testimony. As bad as things get. And as ugly as they become in the country, you want to keep your godly witness for Christ. You may lose your mind, don't lose your witness. That's what he says next.

In fact, as you go on to this next point, you may be wondering why Jesus says so much about this because when you look at the Sermon on the Mount as a whole, at least the first part of it, you find that He goes through things pretty quickly in the first couple of verses. And what I mean is when He says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" in verse three, He just moves on; doesn't say a lot about that. And then when He says, "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted" He does the same thing there too. But when it comes to this issue of salt in verse 13, He does something different because He stops for a moment, then He pauses, and He starts to unpack what He's referring to because He understood how shocking these words were for the Jews. He tells them, "You're the salt of the earth."

The Jews at this time did not care about the earth, the rest of the earth. They cared about Palestine, their little corner of the world, as far as they were concerned, the rest of the world could go to hell. But Jesus

says, “No, that's the wrong way to look at this. You're here for others too and this is how you do this.” If you look in your in your Bibles here, He says, “You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again?” In other words, you are the salt, I've made you that way, I've put my salt in you. You don't have to try to earn it now with your good behavior, but there is something you have to do and that is to stay salty. Because if you don't, the verse goes on and says your salt is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

And I'm going to explain that to you here in just a moment what that means. But before I do, let me just say the word “tasteless” here. It's the Greek word *mōrainō*. It means something's tasteless because it loses its flavor, but it also means something is tasteless because it's stupid or foolish. And the word *mōrainō* sounds like what word in English? Moron right? You guys were quick on that one. You picked up on it right away. Well, that's where it comes from. The term was used in Greek literature to describe someone who had become useless because they just kept making the same mistakes over and over again like a moron. They just kept being foolish with their decisions. Jesus says you don't want to do that with your life as a believer, because if you do, how can you be made salty again?

Now when He refers to that He's not saying you can lose your salvation because you can't. It's not possible. Once saved, always saved. Once salt, always salt, but He's saying you can lose the impact of it. And you can lose the influence of your salvation upon others, and that's what He's warning you against here. I came across an interesting translation of this in the old Scottish Bible. The old Scottish Bible says, “You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its tang,” you gotta love the Scottish, “how can it be made tangy again?” And that really drives the point home because there's lots of Christians who have lost their tang for Christ. They've lost their flavour because they gave into temptation. They compromised. And what happened as a result? Well the world laughs at them. And it makes fun of them. Because the world says, “Well, you tell us not to sin, but you sin. And you warn us not to act that way, but you act that way. What a bunch of morons.” That's what it means to be trampled underfoot by men. Jesus says, “You're the salt, you have an influence on the culture, you can make an impact on the government, you can do great things for My name, but only if you remain faithful to Me with your testimony. It won't happen if you don't.”

To give you some more background for this verse, you know, the people of Israel, they got their salt from the Dead Sea, which was a lake that was full of salt that had become tasteless, a lot of it. Because the Dead Sea is a body of water that's located 1,400 feet below sea level; it's the lowest point on Earth. And that's what causes the salt to go bad because all the minerals and ores from the surrounding landscape just flow right down into that hole and mix with it. And as they mix with it, they spoil the salt they contaminate it. And what Christ is telling the church here is that you don't want to do that with your testimony; don't go down in a hole. Don't let the world contaminate you. You're in the world, you're not of the world. You are part of this culture in a sense; in another sense, you're not part of it. There always needs to be a divide there because the point of salt is that it's different. When you put salt in food, you need to know it's there. The culture needs to know you're there because you stick out.

Some Christians and churches do get this backwards. I remember it wasn't long ago, and you guys will acknowledge this, but there was a popular preacher in Seattle, who made quite a name for himself by teaching the Bible while cursing. And he would preach some good doctrine while at the same time talking about vulgar things in the pulpit. And when he was asked, "Why are you doing that?" He said it was because it was the only way to reach the city of Seattle, he had to become like them. Well, when you read this passage, you have to ask where do you see that in here? Where do you find Jesus telling you the only way to reach people is to compromise that way and let the world contaminate you. It's just the opposite. When you go to some churches today, you find that they don't stand out very much at all anymore. I mean, the reason the world is into things like homosexuality and abortion, and they're really favourable toward that is because so many churches are favourable toward that. And we've had people come to Grace Fellowship and tell us there's no point going to that church or whatever the church is over there, because it's just like a secular institution now. We need to be different from that.

One commentator said, "Surely if words mean anything, we were meant to learn from this figure of assault, that there must be something marked and distinct and peculiar about our lives if we call ourselves Christians. Do you have grace? It needs to be noticed. Do you have the Spirit? It needs to be felt. Do you have true saving religion? Then people need to be able to see it in your habits and tastes and conduct because it's not enough just to go to church, you need to be the church for a lost and dying world to experience and see."

And it brings you to another way that Christ wants the church to impact the government. and that is to be the light of the world. A third way Jesus wants us to impact things is to be the light of the world, which means that He wants the church to be observed. That's the purpose of light. You put light in a room so everyone can see what's going on around them. This world can't see what's going on in heaven, can it? It can't see things from God's point of view. You're here to be light to them in that regard.

And as you approach verse 14, Jesus is going to change this metaphor here. He's been talking about salt, but now He gives you a different image when He says, "You are the light of the world." Earlier He said, "You are salt; Now your light." Before He told you that you're a mineral that spices things up. Now He tells you you're an object that gives illumination.

In fact, the best way to understand this image of light is to compare it to salt because if you look at the two verses together, you find that whereas salt cleanses things, light illuminates them. And whereas salt heals, the light reveals. Salt disinfects, the light discloses. Salt preserves, while the light brings them out in the open for all to see; nobody turns on a light in a dark room and says, "Is the light on?" You know when the light's on. It opens your eyes.

And the idea is that this is what the Lord wants us to do for the world now, to show them that God is there. The world can't see Him. It's your job to help them with that. And just like it was with the

previous verse, Jesus says, “You are the light,” and what that means is that there's only one light the world has, and that's you. There's only one place where they can go to know the truth about spiritual things, and that is the church. That is anti-Canadian, isn't it? It's anti American. I mean, the way the world talks is that if you want light, you can get it from the Muslims and the Buddhists and the Sikhs. And if you want light, you can go to the Hindus and the Mormons and the psychologists up the road, they'll tell you who knows what. You can get in the self-help books. Jesus says, “No, *you* are the light of the world.” The light. The word “the” is a definite article. It means you're not one light among other lights. There's not a whole panoply of things you can pick from here. One light.

The reason is because if you want to write this verse down, John 8:12, the Lord said, “I am the light.” And that means you are the light because He is the light. And you have this because it belonged to Him first. And He's given it to you because your light is a derivative of light. Jesus Christ is the source, fountain, cause, and origin of all light upon the earth spiritually. He's the spring, root, core, and essence of it, which means that the closer you are to Jesus, the more light you have. And the farther you are from Him, the less light you have. And that's why the groups I just mentioned to you are in total darkness. It's because they've turned their back on Christ and run as far as they wait away from Him as they could possibly go. And when they did that, it plunged them into spiritual madness. If you want to hear madness, listen to those groups talk about God. That's not a version of light. That's not a little bit of light. It's all dark. And that's why the world cannot go to them for answers. It has to come to you.

The word “you” here is plural. It's just like the word “you” in verse 13. That means Jesus says, “You all, all of you, every single person within the sound of My voice who believes in Me, *you* serve as the light of the world. It's not like one of you does this while another one doesn't. It's not like one Christian has the light for all to see, while another Christian doesn't because he hasn't gone to seminary. That's not what this means. If you're a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the light is living within you at this moment; you just need to go out there and burn.

This is an example I told you a long time ago, you may or may not remember, but I'll never forget the time I was studying this passage, and I was talking to one of our truck drivers in church at the time, who told me he was riding along with one of his coworkers. When the man asked him, and you know what it's like when you're on the job and you're just trying to find something to talk about. So the man said, “Why do you think the world is so bad right now?” as he was driving. And his brother sitting beside him said, “It's because of sin.” He didn't plan on saying that; it wasn't scripted. It just sort of fell out of his mouth in the truck. He said, “The world is so bad because everyone has messed up and fallen short of the glory of God, and that's why Jesus came in order to save us from it.” The man driving the truck, thought about it a minute, and he said, “I didn't know that. I had no idea that was in the Bible. Can you tell me more?” You see, he was being a light for him. That man was in the dark. He was totally blind to the things of God, and he's wrestling with a very real problem. This world is not good. People tell us things are good. People are good. They're not good. Why? That man brought him into the light. I don't have to tell you why this is necessary because we need Christian truck drivers to do that. We need men

of God to go out on the road and sit beside people like that, so they can be a witness for them and answer their questions because who else is going to do it? I can't do it. I don't work for the company. They won't let me in the truck. You can't do it. You have other things going on. We need them to be a witness there. We also need Christian builders and doctors and nurses. We need Christian lawyers and bankers and businessmen. We need Christian electricians, plumbers, carpenters, salesmen, engineers, pharmacists, teachers, farmers, coaches, managers, policemen. That's the way the church grows. That's the way it works. It happens as you shine the light of the gospel wherever you go. You just find someone who knows less about Christ than you do. And you tell them what you know.

You know a lot of people, they get saved, and the first thing they want to do is go into ministry. And that's great; there's nothing wrong with it. I'm very all for someone stepping into ministry full time. I'm also all for people ministering to those around them in places that ministers can get to. Don't ever think that when you're being a light for others in places like this, you're doing something inferior; you're not. That's what Christ has called you to do.

When you read a statement like, "You are the light of the world." And you put this in context of where it was said, you kind of realize it wouldn't be too long after this, that the church would take over the Roman Empire. And we talked about this when we went through the history of the church, but they didn't take over the Roman empire through Constantine first. The Christians had that influence on the Empire and on the government because the believers would just go about their business and share the gospel with others. They would just witness to people in their shops and fields and homes, and they did it in their kitchens and stores and farmland. That's the way the kingdom of God still spreads today.

And it brings me to another way the church can impact the government here, and that is to remember not to hide your light. Remember that you are the salt of the earth. You don't want to become tasteless; you are the light of the world. And also you do not want to hide your light. That's another way of saying the same thing the Lord said earlier, and that is to make sure you keep a good testimony. Apparently, this was so important to Him that He repeats it twice here for the sake of emphasis. And He goes on to say in verse 14, that "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand and it gives light to all who are in the house."

As the Lord goes deeper into this subject, He explains the statement "You are the light of the world" here by giving you two examples of light that the Jews were familiar with. Now, these might not be as familiar to us living today, but they were familiar with them.

The first is the example of a city on a hill That was a common thing in Israel at the time because just like British Columbia, it was a very hilly place, very mountainous, and most of the cities were built on hills to keep them protected from attack. In order to keep the people safe from an enemy they would set up their cities as high as possible on an elevated piece of ground. And then when an army would come in,

they would all swoop into the fortifications so they could be protected. Jesus' point here is that there's no way to hide something like that. It's so visible. You can't conceal it. Even now, when you go to see ruins and some of these ancient things, you see them from miles away, especially at night because they would put lights in the windows. And the Lord says it should be the same way with you. Your life should be conspicuous; it needs to stand out like a city on a mountaintop.

Then if you look in the text here, there's another example, and that is the example of a lamp. Which doesn't refer to a large round lamp that you would put beside your easy chair in the living room. It refers to something like this. I actually have one of these I picked up when I was over in Israel, can everybody see that? This is the kind of lamp He's referring to. As you can tell, it's pretty small. It wasn't made to put forth a lot of light. It was made to be portable, so you would carry it wherever you went. And the way it worked is that they would put oil in here or some kind of candle, I think they would put that there, and then they would light it. And they would carry it around kind of like a flashlight. And when you got home, they would stick it on a lamp and stand it in their house as verse 15 says. You guys remember the parable of the woman who was looking for the coin in her house? You kind of wonder why was it so hard to find a coin? Well, if you had a dark house, and you had this as your light, it would be hard to find a coin. That's what this was referring to.

In a similar manner, Jesus says you need to carry your light with you wherever you go and keep it high upon a stand instead of hiding and under something. And if you're wondering what the phrase "put your lamp under a basket" means, it could mean several things. Some have taken it to mean you shouldn't hide your faith out of fear and conceal the gospel because you're worried what people may think about you. You need to be bold in your witness for Christ. Others have taken it to mean you shouldn't hide it out of apathy because you're lazy. Some have referred to it with the issue of compromise where you hide the gospel because you're caught up in sin. But I think it refers to all those things. This is all encapsulated in the expression because Jesus says you shouldn't hide your light for anything, no matter what it is. And you shouldn't conceal it for any reason; it's too important.

I think it goes without saying but there's something wrong with a Christian who takes their light and hides it. And there's something unnatural about a person who knows all the answers and believes the gospel, and they understand it because they go to church and read their Bible and have sound theology, but they keep it all to themselves.

The passage, if you look in your verse here, it actually says it's stronger than this because it says that a city on a hill cannot be hidden. And the word "cannot" means it just can't be done. It's impossible. The light of Christ is too strong. If you put it under a basket, it will burn a hole in the basket. And if you stick it under a hamper or something, it will put it up in smoke. When you go to work, if you're a disciple of Christ, if you've trusted Him and loved Him and believed in Him, they will know. There's no way for them not to know. They may not know today, they may not know tomorrow, but it will come up in conversation. Somebody will tell a lewd joke, you won't laugh, and they will ask you why. Somebody

will share some gossip about some bad thing that happened, and you will not be interested, and they'll want to know what your problem is. You can't snuff out your light.

Some people are trying to do that today because the world is making them nervous. They want to hide but there's just no way to do that. Christ has given you the gospel. You cannot keep it all to yourself. In fact, I didn't tell you this earlier, but one reason Jesus' statement is so powerful here is because the ancient world was physically dark at night. Not just spiritually, but it was physically dark because there were no streetlights and there was no electricity. And so they rarely ever traveled at night. If they did, it was very scary, but what it would do is it would make your light shine out all the more. You look at something like this, and you think there's no way this could be ever seen from a distance. Well, if there's nothing out there but this, you'll see it. And that's a good mental picture of what Christ is describing. Our world is dark today. It is pitch black. If you don't believe me, just drive through downtown Chilliwack right now, tell me what you see. But that's what the Lord has put you here for. You might be this, but you will shine in the darkness. And you might just have a candle, but that'll be enough.

And that brings us to one more way that the church impacts the government here. Just to review these other ones. The first one is to be the salt of the earth. Secondly, we want to remember not to become tasteless. Third, remember, you are the light of the world. Fourth, don't hide your light. And for the sake of time, let me just jump into the last one. Here's one more way the church impacts the culture and the government: that is to glorify God through your works. You want to glorify God through your works. That means you want to do all these things so that the name of God will be exalted. And people will look at you and see the glory of Christ coming out of you. That's what this is all about.

Remember, I told you the Gospel of Matthew is about the kingdom. That's what the kingdom of God is about; it's about His glory. That's why the Lord has saved you. And if you look in verse 16, it says, "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who's in heaven."

Now at this point, you can see Jesus is bringing this to a close because He gives you the first command He's given you in the entire section when He says, "Let your light shine." In other words, He says, "You are the light; now let it shine. You are the lamp; I've made you that way. Now let the lamp burn brightly within you." I like what Alistair Begg said about this. In his accent, he said it much better than I can say it in mind, but he said, "If you can't make it burn, at least you can make it twinkle a little bit. If you can't make it glow, at least you can do something for the Lord. Because the command here is not to do anything extravagant. He's not telling you to change who you are. He's telling you to be the average person you are with the light of Christ coming out of you because the only thing unusual about you is the light. The only thing special about you as Jesus." Amen? Everything else about you is very normal.

If you're wondering how to do this, it says to let your light shine before men. And that can be translated, let your light shine in front of men or face to face with men. In other words, don't let your light just

shine when you're at church. Don't let your light just do this when you're at Bible studies or care group or prayer time. That's important, but you do it wherever you go. Wherever you find a man, let your light shine there. Wherever you find a lost woman do the same.

It also says that you are to do this in such a way that people may see your good works. And that means that this is what you shine with, in the context here, and that is your works. You stand out with your behavior. And that's important because if you notice, He doesn't tell you to shine with your good arguments, although there's a place for that. And He's not telling you to share the light with your good logic, although that's essential as well. First Peter 3:15 says we need to always be ready to make a defense to anyone who asks us to give an account for the hope that we have. But in this setting, He's telling you to do it with your works because that's something all of us can do. An old Christian can glorify God with their good works and a new Christian can do it. A strong Christian can honour Him with their behavior and a weak one can do it.

In fact, if you look back at the passage, the word "works" is plural. He's not referring to just one work you do but many works, several works, lots of works. This is not about perfection. As someone has said before, it's about direction. That's how you glorify God the most; you do it by honouring Him with your conduct day in and day out. So the person sitting next to you in the truck can see it. You do it so the man working beside you in the office can watch you and notice there's something different and ask you about it and be saved.

In fact, going back to how we started all this, if you wonder, how can a Christian impact the government today? The answer is you just go back to the basics. I mean, everything He says in this passage is so basic. And when you ask the question, "How should we respond to all the evil things in the world? How do we change it?" Well, the response is you just returned to fundamentals. I mean, Jesus is telling you to respond by loving God and loving your neighbor. He's telling you to react by believing in Him and doing good for others, sharing your faith, let your light shine, be a witness, pray for God to use it.

You know, the one thing He's telling you not to do in this passage, or the one thing He doesn't mention, is to complain. He's not saying the one way to help the government or help the culture is to throw your hands up in the air and say, "I quit. I can't do this anymore." That's not an option here. Listen, your government is wicked. There are believers there. There are people being Salt and Light within the halls of government. They're keeping it from getting worse, but it is doing things that are sinful. But it was that way in the first century. I mean if you do a study of this time in history, you'll find that place was awful too. The Roman Empire was depraved. And Jesus tells these people to keep fighting, keep going, persevere. That's what My disciples do; they don't quit.

The reason this is so important to talk about is because it seems like things are going in a bad direction. Our world is becoming more like the Roman Empire every day. When I was first studying this passage, a while ago, the Chilliwack Progress had done an article which said that the British Columbia has

become the least religious province in Canada right now. You guys remember that? For the first time in history, they were reporting that there were more lost people living here than saved ones. And that shocked me because I remember thinking I thought Canada was already secular, it's getting more secular. I'll tell you something, even though that grieves our hearts, and we want to do what we can to change it, we don't belong to the kingdom of Canada first, do we? We belong to the kingdom of God. And that means if British Columbia continues to go further and further from God, we don't follow them in that. And if Canada continues to drift, it doesn't change our priorities; our goal is the same. We want to glorify God; we want to stay here and make a difference because that's what we've been put on this earth to do.

Speaking of that, next time, we're going to do our last sermon on this topic of the government. And I want to give you the example of someone who exemplified this passage very well. And that is the name William Wilberforce. You may have heard of him before; he was the one who was responsible for ending the slave trade in England in the 1700's. And he did it as a member of the government. When he was saved, he had just been elected to Parliament, he'd only been there about five or six years. And he wanted to leave to go into the ministry because it was so wicked there. And he sat down and talked to a man named John Newton, the author of Amazing Grace, they were friends, and he asked him what he should do. And John Newton said, "I would tell you to stay right where you are because we need someone to help the people in government who is a Christian." And that's what he did. And it would go on to cost him his health, he lost friends over it, but he began to battle what he considered to be the greatest evil the government was perpetrating at the time, and that was the slave trade. And over the course of 20 years, the Lord allowed him to bring an end to it. But that wouldn't happen if he didn't stay where he was and be the salt of the earth, light of the world. And I can't end this series without saying a few words about him. His life gives you a great example of someone who put this into practice.

But for now, what I want to do is close in a word of prayer. Ask the Lord to help us to take what we've learned here and apply it for His glory and for our good, let's pray. And let's also pray the Lord can prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper.

Heavenly Father, these words we've read this morning, are convicting to us. I don't think there's any of us who are salty enough or light enough for the world as we should be. But yet as You have shown us in this text, that doesn't change the fact that we already are these things because of Christ. It's not because of us or any good that we've done. It's because of Him and the power of the gospel that's changed our hearts and lives. We were in darkness; we're now light. We were once tasteless; now we're salt because of Him.

Lord, thank You for the Lord Jesus. Thank You that not only does He save us, but He also teaches us in these things in this text; opens our eyes to new things. And Lord as we come to the Lord's table, we want to remember what He has done for us. Lord He has given us a new birth, He's redeemed us, He's

regenerated us, He's converted our dark souls from death to life. Lord, and as He's done that, we want to be these things, not to praise ourselves, but to praise Him.

Thank You for the cross. Thank You for Christ. Thank You that our sins were paid for there and full and there's nothing left over to pay. Thank You that we have been born again, and we're waiting for that day for a new resurrection in Him that we may rise physically as well as we've done spiritually because of His work, Lord. In all these things, we want to point our eyes to heaven.

And Father, I do pray for those who were here this morning if anyone is discouraged over what's going on in our world today, maybe this message would have helped them to remind them there are things that we can do in our own way through Christ. May He be glorified as we begin to go out into the darkness and shed this light. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.