

Astonished prt 5
Matthew 5:13–16

MPS: Kingdom people are salt in a decaying world and light in a dark world

WELCOME

- Partnership experience March 1-22
- Men's breakfast Feb 26 and men's event March 6

PRAYER TIME

Psalm 52:8–9 (ESV) **8** *But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever.* **9** *I will thank you forever, because you have done it. I will wait for your name, for it is good, in the presence of the godly.*

I thank you for _____ because you have done it

8 *But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever.*

- Evergreen / flourishing — always alive, vibrant, and thriving (not withering like the wicked who are "uprooted").
- Deeply rooted and secure — planted "in the house of God" (close to His presence), stable and supplied amid trials/opposition.
- Fruitful and productive — produces olives/oil for nourishment, healing, anointing, light (illumination), joy, peace, and blessing.
- Long-lasting / enduring — olive trees are hardy, long-lived (some ancient ones still stand), symbolizing steadfastness, prosperity, beauty, and divine favor.
- Peace and reconciliation — olive branches/oil often signify peace (e.g., Noah's dove) and covenant blessing.

As I trust in You, Lord, make me/us a green olive tree in the area of _____.

relationships (or family / marriage / friendships)

faith / spiritual life — to remain evergreen and deeply rooted, unshaken by trials, drawing constant nourishment from God's presence.

workplace / vocation / daily responsibilities

service / community / church

overcoming trials / adversity

generosity / stewardship

OPEN

- Who do you think you are? (not as in a rebuke, but in sincerity – who do you believe yourself to be?) Who are you? That's a question of identity.

- Over the years, thousands and thousands of verdicts are coming in about you, and they accumulate.

You're smart / you're not smart
 you are good / you are terrible
 you are useful / you are useless.
 You always figure it out / You can't do anything right.
 You're gifted / You're slow
 You're talented / You're mediocre / You're a failure.
 You're honest / You're a liar.
 You're responsible / You're unreliable.
 You're lovable / You're unlovable.
 You matter / You're a burden.
 You're worthy / You're worthless.
 You belong / You don't fit in / You're defective.
 You're successful / You're a loser.
 You're attractive / You're ugly.
 You're popular / You're awkward.
 You're fun / You're boring.
 You're brave / You're a coward.

- Over years, countless small "verdicts"—judgments, labels, and messages about who we are—accumulate from parents, teachers, peers, failures, successes, culture, and our own interpretations. These form a dominant **identity narrative** or **story** we live under, casting us as the main character in our own life script.

Notice these examples identities are posed as **dichotomies** (opposites) because **both extremes distort us and trap us in unhealthy patterns:**

- **Positive verdicts** ("You're smart / good / useful / capable / attractive"): These inflate the ego, fostering **self-righteousness** (I'm superior/morally better), **self-dependence** (I don't need God/others; I can handle everything alone), pride, entitlement. Over time, they create a narrative of self-sufficiency that resists humility, vulnerability, or grace.
- **Negative verdicts** ("You're not smart / terrible / useless / weak / unlovable"): These erode worth, ushering in **fear** (I'll be rejected/abandoned), **guilt** (I must atone endlessly), and **shame**(I am fundamentally defective/flawed). This builds a narrative of inadequacy or victimhood.
- In both cases, the accumulated "evidence" solidifies a **false self-story**:

- We either strive to **live out** the label (proving "I'm smart/good" or avoiding "I'm useless/terrible")
- Or we fight desperately to **escape/reject** the titles we've been given and simply give in and give up.
- Neither extreme reflects our true identity in Christ
- And if all those verdicts coming at you aren't difficult enough, we have an enemy that also chimes in – making us question who we are and whose we are... Just look at his mode of operation with Jesus and His identity ... "If you are the son of God"
- Identity Crisis – we are describing ourselves by what others have said, what our enemy says, or by what we do... rather than saying, "I'm a citizen of the Kingdom, made new with a new identity."

We find our identity in the Word of God:

I am blessed
 I am appreciated
 I am saved
 I am reconciled
 I am heard
 I am gifted
 I am forgiven
 I am adopted
 I am loved
 I am Fathered
 I am rewarded
 I am a saint

- The Bible is not a book of rules; it's a story, a big story, and God invites you into it. You can become a part of a greater story that He has written.
- God's story is the grand narrative
- You are a subplot in God's story – AND He gives you the identity within this story. Here on the sermon on the mount, Jesus gives us yet another form of our identity: Salt and light
- Notice the "you are" language – that is identity language. And therefore, you valuable. Both salt and light are valuable. Life can't even exist without light.

Kingdom people are salt in a decaying world and light in a dark world

- Those who've entered the kingdom of God have new roles to fulfill in the world. The Lord has given you a new identity to operate from and the Holy Spirit to empower you to – play that role.

1. Kingdom people are salt in a decaying world.

Vs 13a *"You are the salt of the earth..."*

- Salt was and is used in a number of ways—as a seasoning, as a preservative, or as a purifying agent. Which of these meanings was foremost in Matthew's mind is hard to say. However, it seems like its probably preserving and perhaps seasoning.
- What is certain is that salt plays a vital role in everyday life, and that disciples have a similar role to play in the world

a. Salt as a preservative

- The world, as it is, is subject to decay. It's disintegrating. It's falling apart
- In physics this is known as Entropy – everyone knows it.

Romans 8:19–21 (NIV) 19 *For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. 20* *For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.*

- When Kingdom people see things falling apart, they get in there.
- When you see somebody emotionally falling apart, you go in, like salt. When you see a neighborhood socially or economically falling apart, you go in.. You're salt.
- As salt, we reflect His preserving work—entering decaying situations (relationships, culture, hearts) with His stable, unchanging grace to hold back rot and point to the One who ultimately redeems it all.

Hebrews 13:8 (ESV) 8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*

- Ancient people used salt to preserve meat – which when dead it decays; but when preserves gives life... that is us!

b. Salt as seasoning

- The other job of salt was not just to be a preservative. It was also to make something taste good.
- Salt on a steak – you don't leave saying, that was great salt, but that was a great steak.
- If the sermon is ever good, you don't go away saying, wow what a great preacher, but instead, wow, God is a great God!
- When you go away from a community group in which you've been the salt, people don't go away saying how great you are. They go away saying, "What a great God and what a great group!"

Colossians 4:6 (ESV) 6 *Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

- Kingdom people don't look at a situation and say, "What can I get out of it?" but instead, he/she acts like salt and gets in there and says, "How can I bring the best out of this organization, out of this group, out of these people?" One of the big problems in business today is people just want to come into the business and say, "How can I get the most out of this company to use it as a stepping stone to keep on moving? How can I enhance myself?" Kingdom people go into a company and say, "How can I make this the best possible place.
- It's the opposite of consumerism – instead, your identity as a kingdom person is that you are an agent of redemption and change. It's not what you can get out of a situation, a place, a group, a person, a job... It is ALWAYS what you can give.
- Because the job of salt is not to make you think how great the salt is but how great the thing is that it's involved with.

Psalms 34:8 (ESV) 8 *Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!*

Vs 13b *but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*

- We lose our meaning when we forget who we are
- We are trampled under the verdicts of others when we forget who we are.

2 Chronicles 13:5 (ESV) 5 *Ought you not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?*

2. Kingdom people are light in a dark world

Vs 14-15 *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.*

it is the nature of light to be seen or visible: Lamps are placed on stands where they can illumine large areas, and a city atop a hill will be visible at a great distance.

- Darkness is the absence of light – and darkness is not good for anyone
- Boyd and I falling off the ebikes in the dark – when you operate in the dark, you end up in the ditch... and you cause others to end up in the ditch too.

John 8:12 (ESV) 12, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

John 12:35–36 (ESV) 35... *The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light."*

- Utter darkness gives you a sense of unbelievable vertigo and disorientation and dislocation

"In the 1950s, psychologist Donald Hebb recruited paid student volunteers—bright, healthy young men—and placed them in small, soundproof cubicles designed for extreme sensory isolation. They wore goggles that diffused light into a featureless gray (no patterns, no shapes), The goal was to see how long they could endure near-total deprivation of meaningful sensory input—Hebb hoped for weeks.

What happened shocked everyone: Most couldn't last more than two or three days; none made it past a week. Within hours to days, participants experienced intense disorientation, spatial confusion, and vertigo-like effects— struggling with a profound sense of dislocation. Many reported vivid hallucinations: like rows of little men, wallpaper designs, or even full auditory illusions (a choir singing). Some felt electric shocks from imaginary objects or saw the room flooded with phantom light. Cognitive abilities plummeted—they couldn't concentrate, solve simple problems, or maintain coherent thought. One subject described it as **the mind turning inward with no anchor, leading to unbearable restlessness, fear, and a breakdown of reality**

2 Corinthians 4:4 (ESV) 4 *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Vs 16 *In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

- Doesn't that contradict Matthew 6:1?

Matthew 6:1 (ESV) 1 *"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven."*

- This verse does not contradict 6:1 because there the motive for good behavior in public is self-glorification rather than bringing glory to God.
- There are two Greek words that can be used for good, *agathos* and *kalos*. *Agathos* means good in quality, and *kalos* means beautiful, and it's *kalos* that's used here. It says your deeds ought to be beautiful. People ought to say, That's "Astonishing!"

Isaiah 43:7 (ESV) 7 *everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."*

- "The good news about the Sermon on the Mount is when you read through carefully, you will see Jesus Christ does not say, "Try to live like this, and then God will be your Father." Oh no. All the way through here he says, "You can live like this if you already know God is your Father." Tim Keller
- If we receive him as Savior, his light comes in

Ephesians 5:6–14 (ESV) 6 *Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7* *Therefore do not become partners with them; 8* *for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9* *(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10* *and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11* *Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12* *For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. 13* *But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14* *for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS:

1. What areas of your sphere of influence can you be salt and light?
2. What is keeping you from being salt and light in those areas? What will you do about it?