

Upside Down Kingdom: Rub it in

Small Group Discussion

Matthew 5:13-16

Opening Question (get everyone involved in discussion):

- Share about someone you know who is very distinct—without his or her presence in a particular place or group, everything would be different. What makes them so distinct?

Read Matthew 5:13-16, and then discuss the following.

1. In this passage, Jesus uses two familiar analogies to talk about how our identity as Christians changes the environments where we live and work. The first is that he calls us “the salt of the earth.”
 - What characteristic of salt was Jesus primarily drawing on to describe our presence in the world?
 - The metaphor implies that the systems around us—culture, arts, neighborhoods, workplaces, education, etc.—would be in decline without our presence there. To what degree have you seen this principle to be true, in your experience?
 - What are some ways that people in your group, or our church, are currently having this impact?
 - Recall Pastor Josh’s explanation of how salt could lose its saltiness. What are some ways that we, as Christ-followers on Long Island, might “lose our saltiness?” (I.e., our ability to act as a preservative in the world around us).
2. The second analogy that Jesus uses to describe our presence in the world is that of light and darkness.
 - Once again, Jesus implies that without the presence of his people in the world around them, life is very dark. What is the cause of this darkness?
 - What is different about followers of Jesus that makes them/us able to be light in the surrounding darkness?
 - Have you seen this playing out—either in your own life, or someone else’s—during the pandemic?
 - Jesus points out how silly it would be to light an oil lamp and put it under a basket, effectively darkening the light. What are some ways that you/we might hide our light, so to speak, from the world around us?
 - Pastor Josh mentioned that some of us are overly-identified with the culture and afraid to be distinct, thus hiding our light. Others of us tend to spend too much time condemning the culture around us, thus dimming our light. Do you tend to fall into one of those camps?
3. On Sunday we learned that when Jesus says, “You are the salt of the earth,” and “You are the light of the world,” the word “you” is in the emphatic position in the sentences. Why does this matter so much?
 - How do you feel about the fact that Jesus puts this kind of significance on you? Are you surprised by it?

4. Jesus has pointed out the influence that our presence will have, simply because of who we are in him. Now, in v. 16, he gives us our marching orders.
 - What does it look like to “let your light shine before others” and “let them see your good deeds”? How do you feel about this command? Does anything about it trouble you?
 - What is the difference between letting people see your good deeds for the sake of applause, and letting them see your good deeds so that they will glorify God?
 - On Sunday, Pastor Josh suggested that for us, this action looks like getting into people’s lives, in our neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. Are there ways that you are intentionally doing this, which might encourage someone else? Do you currently see ways that you could get into people’s lives that you haven’t yet done?
 - How could our small group intentionally get into our community to be salt and light, pointing people to Jesus?

5. Share about your **prayer needs** with your group. As you **pray for one another**, spend some time praying for God to open your eyes to the needs he wants to meet through you in the surrounding community. Pray for specific opportunities and the courage to seize them.