



First Baptist Church Selmer

SERMON ON THE MOUNT • JESUS & THE LAW • MATTHEW 5:13-20 • 9/14/2025

MAIN POINT

Our lives are either a help or a hindrance to the advancement of the gospel for the Kingdom of God. Which is yours?

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Mission Statement: *"To be plainly instructed and consider well that the main end of your life and studies is to know God and Jesus Christ."*

Can anyone name the university that was founded upon this truth and mission? (Union? Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary?...)

If you mentioned any names other than Harvard University, you would have been mistaken. Yes, in 1636, Harvard University was founded by employing exclusively Christian professors to train students for the advancement of the gospel. Even today, the motto, *"Christo et Ecclesiae,"* can be found on every diploma of Harvard graduates, which in Latin means "For Christ and Church."

Is it possible for institutions, and individuals for that matter, to live for Christ in name or image only?

We wouldn't have to dig too deep to see that Harvard University, along with many others, has drifted through compromise from its original mission and motto to proclaim Jesus and advance the gospel. But instead of looking at these institutions alone, it is important that we evaluate any areas of compromise we may have in our lives as well.

In the *Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary*, Daniel Akin states, "Compromise is a deadly cancer to our witness to the world. When we are seduced by the sirens of materialism,

political expediency, irresponsible rhetoric, moral laxity, or foolish actions, the attractiveness and beauty of the Christian life is lost. However, if we maintain our commitments and convictions to Christ with grace and humility, people will inevitably take notice."

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:13.

13 "You are the salt of the earth, 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." (ESV)

What is the purpose of salt?

How does salt's purpose relate to this passage?

Salt's purpose is fivefold: (1) purity, (2) preservation, (3) flavor, (4) healing, (5) creation of thirst. It's amazing what a pinch of salt can do to bring out the flavor inside food. Similarly, when Christians exert their influence in the world, we season the world with the gospel of Christ. Throughout history, we see how this has happened as followers of Jesus have contributed to the overall good of cultures and societies.

The use of salt also speaks about food preservation. Until recent times, salt kept food from spoiling and increased its shelf life. When Christians exert their influence in everyday situations, they keep the world from getting worse than it already is. Christians display integrity, goodness, honesty, and joy, just to name a few.

How do Christians both preserve and improve culture? Where is the threshold of preserving but also improving?

It is also true that salt makes you thirsty. Salty food makes you crave water to quench your thirst. Whether people realize it or not, they're constantly thirsty for more. Christians salt the palate of everyone around them. The lifestyle of a Christian should be so different, so inspiring, so transformational that it leaves people thirsty for more. The life of a Christian shows the world what they're missing out on—the peace of Jesus Christ.

As my friend Tim Taylor once stated, "You have heard it said that you can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink. You can, however, feed him lots of salt and make him really thirsty." We need to be salt Christians. Even if others aren't ready to drink from the life-giving water of the Word of God, we should be constantly feeding them salt.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:14-16.

14 "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. 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." (ESV)

How do you picture being a light to the world? What about our community?

What obstacles prevent you from shining the light of Christ more brightly?

How do we shine our light in such a way that it brings glory to God and not ourselves?

Consider the purpose of light. In that day and time, light was about utility and work; it existed in limited supply, therefore forcing people to make the most of the time during daylight hours. Only in the light can we see and know the true nature of what's before us. When you light a lamp in a darkened room, you get immediate clarity. Light reveals all mystery and dispels all fear of what's lurking in the dark.

When has the Holy Spirit revealed light into your heart, showing you a sin from which you needed to repent? How did you respond to His revealing light?

How has God used another Christian to be a light of Jesus in your life? How did he or she shed light on your situation but also leave you thirsty for more of Jesus?

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 5:17-20.

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom

of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (ESV)

From your knowledge of Jesus and from this passage, how was Jesus someone the Israelites did not expect? How did Jesus surprise both Jews and Gentiles?

When Jesus burst onto the scene, people had a lot of questions about His identity and purpose. He wasn't like any teacher they'd heard before. He claimed to be the Son of God. He came bearing peace, not a sword. He performed miracles. He associated with the kinds of people who were generally considered off-limits. He was meek, yet He taught with absolute authority. Jesus was the best surprise Israel would ever witness.

What did Jesus mean when He said He *"did not come to destroy but to fulfill"* (v. 17)? What did Jesus come to earth to fulfill?

Jesus didn't replace the written Word of God; He fulfilled it. That's because the law was never intended to be the means to make people right with God. Instead, it was always meant to point people to Jesus.

As James Boice states, "The Bible is about Jesus... He is the fulfillment in all ways. He fulfills the moral law by his obedience, the prophecies by the specifics of (his) life, and the sacrificial system by his once-and-for-all atonement."

What did Jesus mean when He said that your righteousness *"surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees"* (v. 20)?

Verse 20 can seem confusing. How can we have righteousness that *"surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees"*? We can't. But Jesus did, and He gives it to us. When we receive Christ's righteousness, we are changed on the inside. As Bible commentator Charles Quarles states, "He surpassed the law by insisting that one should avoid sinful attitudes as well as sinful actions."

What's left for us, then, is to live out the change Jesus has brought to our hearts. Those who live out this grace-filled change are like salt and light. They influence others by visibly demonstrating what Jesus has done in their hearts.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

It takes intention to be salt and light. What changes can you make in your routine this week so you can spend more time with God?

Identify a believer whom you respect—someone who is salt and light in the community. Ask to meet with that person to help you follow Jesus more closely.

What's one step you can take this week to live as salt and light in your community? Look for a chance this week to speak directly about the gospel at a place outside your church or small group.

PRAYER

Reflect and pray for strength from Christ to be the salt and light of the world so our lives honestly display God's love and mercy.

COMMENTARY

| MATTHEW 5:13-20

5:13 As the salt of the earth, Jesus' disciples are to purify a corrupt world through their example of righteous living and their proclamation of the gospel. However, contaminated salt does not promote purity. The verb translated lose its taste indicates foolish and immoral behavior. It refers to a professing disciple whose unrighteous lifestyle promotes destruction rather than purification. Nothing grows where they go. The verb thrown out describes the disposal of something worthless, and the verb trampled alludes to the treatment an immoral disciple receives from the world.

5:14-16 You are the light of the world is an allusion to Isa 9:1-2; 42:6; 49:6—texts that describe the ministry of Messiah, Servant of the Lord. This indicates that Jesus' disciples are to be extensions of His ministry, carrying salvation to the ends of the earth. Such ministry is intrinsic to true discipleship. A disciple should no more conceal his righteousness or the gospel message than a glowing city should extinguish its light at night. The reference to giving light for all combines with the reference to the world to show that Christ's ministry is intended for all people. This anticipates the Great Commission of Matt. 28:18-20.

Jesus' words make clear that the disciple is not the ultimate author of his good works. If the disciple were the author of his good works, he would justly receive praise. However, Jesus taught that only the Father in heaven is to be praised for a disciple's good works, for He is the true source of such works. This must not be overlooked. The righteousness demanded by the Sermon on the Mount is a divine gift that God imparts to Jesus' followers.

5:17-20 Jesus defended Himself against charges that He defied the law (9:3,11,14; 12:2,10; 15:1-2; 17:24; 19:3; 22:34-36) by insisting that He came to fulfill both the Law and the Prophets, which together amount to the entire OT. The word "fulfill" may refer to fulfillment of OT prophecies (1:22; 2:15,17,23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:54,56; 27:9). This is suggested by the words all things are accomplished. However, it can also refer to obedience to God's commands (3:15). This additional meaning is implied by the reference to practicing these commands. Consequently, Jesus' words imply that He would fulfill all of the OT promises and obey all its commandments. The smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet is the yod, which resembles an English apostrophe. The stroke of a letter is a slight pen stroke that distinguishes similar letters, such as R from P. Jesus' statement shows that He regarded the OT as accurate and reliable down to the smallest detail. In keeping with this conviction, Jesus taught that fidelity to the OT witness determines a disciple's stature in His kingdom. True fidelity to God's commands is made possible by God's miraculous work in a disciple's heart.