

Influence

Good morning again church. As we continue our time of worship today, I hope that you spent time this week in our Bible reading plan – looking at Matthews chapters 3-8. One of the drawbacks of setting our preaching schedule around a reading plan is that we won't have the opportunity to take the time to explore all of the verses we've been reading. In fact, we could probably spend several months just in these chapters from Matthew that we read this week.

We saw in the Scriptures for this week Jesus' baptism, then his temptation in the wilderness, the launching of his public ministry, the calling of some of the first disciples. We started to see Jesus' healing ministry, and how the news of what he was doing was spreading throughout the whole region. Then in Matthew 5-7 we get this incredible teaching section called the Sermon on the Mount. Some of you may remember we spent the Summer of 2019 working through the Sermon on the Mount verse by verse.

And really, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is starting to turn their world upside down. Pointing them to the truth that much of what they had thought would happen wasn't going to happen their way, and in their timing. All throughout the Sermon on the Mount we have these "You have heard...but I say..." type of statements. Jesus is challenging what they think they know. And he lays out for us, in 3 chapters of Matthew, how Christians are to live in a hostile and sin infested world.

The text we are looking at today, is specifically a call to be influencers in the world.

Turn with me, if you have a Bible, or turn it on and swipe to Matthew 5:13-16

READ 5:13-16

¹³ "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty?^[b] It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are 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 in heaven.

PRAY.

Main Idea: Christians are called to influence people, for their good and God's glory.

In both of these analogies, Jesus gives us a statement and a warning. Both with being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, He gives a statement and a warning.

I. The Salt Life

The Statement: You **ARE** the salt of the earth. Not...go be salty. Do what salt is intended to do! You and I think of salt largely as a flavor provider. We use a lot of salt in our house. Or at

least we plan to use a lot of salt in our house. At any given time, we have different varieties of salt. Victoria even has her preferred type of salt – from a store about 30 minutes away – we have to stock up when we’re down that way so we won’t run out.

But in a 1st century context, salt was a major preservative. Used to keep things like meat from rotting out.

But regardless of how we use salt – to keep something from rotting or to enhance the flavor of some type of food – salt is always going to have an influence. Always.

And...**you can always tell when something hasn’t been salted**. Pre-COVID, we had our small group in our home and it was chili night. Now, I didn’t want to ask Victoria to make the chili, I just did it. One less thing for her to have to worry about. And apparently I was doing a bunch of things, and didn’t salt the chili. Let me tell you something, that chili was nasty. I think some of the kids took like two bites then filled up on bread or something. Man it was nasty. Because it wasn’t salted.

You can always tell when something hasn’t been salted. Always.

So Jesus makes this statement that, as a Christian you are the salt of the earth, but he also gives us a warning.

“But if the salt shall lose its taste how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.”

Jesus is talking about the importance of PURITY. Like, he’s not saying you stop being a Christian, but he is saying you can lose your influence over others. The warning here is to live your life in such a way that you don’t lose the opportunity to influence others!

In our home, we use salt, a lot of salt, but we’re not going to use nasty salt. I’ll never forget as a kid the first time I saw rice in a salt shaker. Growing up in SW FL, super humid, and humidity and salt don’t really mix, right? So you put some rice in with the salt shaker, the thought is the rice would suck up any humidity, and keep the salt dry and good. Well, the first time I saw that I thought there were bugs in the salt shaker! And nobody wants to use nasty bug salt in their food.

So Jesus calls his followers the salt of the earth – salt working behind the scenes – you always know when it’s missing – even though you don’t always see it when it’s there. If we call being the salt of the earth playing defense maybe, Jesus would next call us to play offense.

II. Let It Shine

RE-READ V14-15

Jesus is calling us to play offense. How do you get rid of the darkness? Turn on the lights! And just like the previous verse, Jesus gives us a statement and a warning.

STATEMENT: You ARE the light of the world. We're called to play offense here. If Christ is in you, if you have turned from your sin and are trusting in Jesus alone, you ARE the light of the world. And lights are intended to be ON AND PUSHING BACK DARKNESS! Our son Shawnkos loves to turn lights on. Love to. I'm gonna tell you Shawnkos – next time I get on you about turning lights on just tell me you're trying to let your light shine just like Jesus tells us to do.

Light forces out darkness. Even a little bit of light. Some of you know I've at times had a hard time sleeping at night. Go through seasons of insomnia. And it's silly, but like even the smallest amount of light at times will disturb my sleep. So much so that I have to use a dimmable alarm clock, have to make sure the blinds are turned the proper way, the bathroom door closed at night, and will even at times put a sleeve of golf balls blocking out that little light on the cable box. Because even a little bit of light, will start to force out darkness.

This is the type of influence Christians are to have in the world. To push back darkness. But, for light to serve its purposes, we have to let it shine. And that's the warning Jesus gives.

LET IT SHINE!

Re-READ V15

We have to let it shine. Don't hide it. Don't cover it up. We have to let it shine. The way we speak at RCM, is Families, sharing and showing Jesus to every family in our community one family at a time. We have to let it shine.

So go shine the light of Jesus in every corner of our own life, our home, and every person we come into contact with. Share the good news of Jesus, show the ways of Jesus. Because hear me, light forces out darkness, and light is intended to be ON AND SHINING BRIGHT AND FAR!

THE GOAL OF OUR INFLUENCE

When we live like this – with a gospel centered goal of influencing people – God is glorified. “So that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

This is the goal. The goal of our influence isn't so people would think we're really awesome, or morally upright, or whatever. Let me tell you – living for the praises of other people is EXHAUSTING! When we're always trying to get that “atta boy,” or that trophy or that like on instagram or facebook or twitter – bro that's exhausting. Because you'll never be able to keep up. But, living by the Spirit of God, for the glory of God alone is FREEING! Using your influence to point people to Jesus, whatever level of influence you have, using it to point people to Jesus is FREEING! Because you don't have to try and keep up with the next guy or gal, the next fad, the next whatever.

The goal of living with influence, of both defensive and offensive influence, is that Jesus would be worshiped, that God would be glorified, praised, worshiped, feared, and honored as holy.

CLOSING

What would it look like if we decided, by God's grace and Spirit in us, what if we decided to use our influence not to promote or protect ourselves, but to point everyone to the greatness of the God that we love and serve? What would it look like if we saw every relationship as an opportunity to share and show Jesus?

It's impossible to influence people that we:

- Isolate from
- Look down on
- Refuse to see as Jesus sees
- Are more concerned proving our rightness than showing compassion toward.

But as a Christian, the Gospel is never intended to stop with you. God saves you for a purpose → to influence others for the glory of God and for their good.

So how can we be cautious not to lose our flavor or make sure that we keep our Light Shining? Glad you asked.

1. **Don't ever "get-over" the Gospel.** Because we never, ever get over the Gospel. If you've been with us even for just one or two Sundays you know that we believe, better yet the Bible teaches, that the Gospel isn't just the starting point in your Christian life. It's the starting point, the ending point, and the every point in between
2. **Don't be a jerk.** Anyone remember our very first CORE VALUE as a church? Gracious. The easiest way to explain being Gracious is simply not being a jerk – to think of others before yourself. Allow yourself to be offended by others. Even online! If you're on social media, first thing I'd encourage you to do is to disengage from it. But let's be real, none of us are going to disengage – so don't be a jerk online.
3. **Guard your lifestyle.** LIVE CONSISTENTLY. Seek to live a goldy, and holy life, and peaceful life. How you speak, what you watch, how you drive, how you love and devote yourself to your spouse if you're married or your future spouse if you're unmarried.
4. **Guard your beliefs.** I know what the Bible says but...Hear me, one of the fastest ways to lose your saltiness, or to see your light be hidden, is to set aside this book. You may be able to gain position and esteem in the eyes of people, but you'll never be able to influence people for the sake of the Gospel if you start setting aside parts of this book.
5. **Focus on the RIGHT THINGS.** So many of us spend so much time focusing on good things, but things that really don't matter and things that won't last. **Illustration – What difference will it make in 10 years...**
6. **Decide right now, today, that God's opinion is all that really matters.**