

**Matthew 5:13-20.** <sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. <sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. <sup>17</sup> “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. <sup>18</sup> I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Anyone who breaks 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 practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

***You are Blessed so Be a Blessing***

- 1. God has made you for a purpose.***
- 2. Live in obedience to God's Commands.***

It is the kind of conversation that a curious person of any age would appreciate, and it is one that most parents with small children have had more than once. “Why is salt salty?” When asked this question a father quickly searches the database of his mind looking for some answer that he learned in some class long ago. He tries to uncover some answer that he came across on some television show or magazine article. But when nothing comes, he answers, “Well, son, it just does?” or better yet “Well, son, God made it that way.

Today as we continue to listen to our Savior's Sermon on the Mount the Lord Jesus begins to address and focus in on the sanctified life of the believer. He instructs and teaches his disciples about the behavior expected for a child of God. Why does a believer have different moral standards than the unbeliever? Why does a believer refrain from sin and try to live a good life? Why does a believer listen to God's Word and look to that word for daily guidance in his or her life? Well, the simple answer is that God has made us that way. Through faith in Christ God has made us to love him and to love our neighbor; to serve our Lord and to serve each other. God has placed his love in our hearts. He has given us saving faith in him. He has given us his Word and now we delight in his Word of truth. Through faith we know and appreciate and believe what Jesus Christ has done. Through faith in Christ God has given us the Holy Spirit and a new heart and now we care more about how we treat others and how we live. We care about what God's Word says and we

pay attention to his word and strive to keep his Word and obey his commands. Why? Well, because God has made us that way.

Jesus started his Sermon on the Mount by telling his disciples that they are blessed. Today he tells us to *be a blessing* to those around us. And so we look at our lesson for today under this theme: **You are blessed, so be a blessing. God has made you for a purpose. Therefore, live in the light of God's commands.**

Jesus encourages his listeners to do this by calling them, calling us, salt and light. Both of these items are, of course, valuable. Not too long ago we lost power around here and without light it was hard to function. Candles and flashlights were very valuable things to have. Light is important. Light is valuable. As is salt; salt is an important ingredient in our cooking. It is found in the cupboard, or pantry, or right on the table in just about every home. It is important and valuable. And back before the days of the refrigerator and the deep freeze salt was extremely important. It was used not only to season your food and make it taste better, but it was used as a preservative to keep meat and other foods from spoiling. It was important and valuable when it did what it was made to do.

But what if salt would lose its saltiness, what if it did no longer do what God made it to do? That would be a problem. It seems that there might have been such a problem back in Jesus' day. Some think that dishonest people took extra fillers, small white pebbles, bits of quartz, and other junk that could pass off as genuine salt crushed it up and added it to a bag of salt to make it heavier. Dishonest merchants did this in order to trick people and make more money for themselves. But of course if this salt had all these fillers in with it, it would no longer do what salt was made to do. It would not preserve like it was supposed to, and it certainly wouldn't taste good.

Jesus tells his disciples that God made you for a purpose. You were born again through faith in Jesus in order that we might help him keep this world from becoming completely rotten. He has made you to live a good life and be a positive impact on those around you. You are able to do this in a way that pleases God because he has washed you and made you clean in Baptism. He has made your heart pure through the cleansing blood of Christ. He has blessed you with the sure hope that great is your reward in heaven because of faith in Jesus. And now he has sanctified you, that is, he has set you apart for his good purpose.

Remember how Jesus started this sermon with those words of blessing and promise. ***Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God. Rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven (Matthew 5:8, 12).*** God has made you blessed, and now he calls you to live a life of obedience so that you might be a blessing to others. This is what Christ had called you to be. This is why he saved and redeemed you. This is why he has made you a new creation through faith in him; to be salt and light. God has made you; he has set you free to let the light of Jesus shine in your hearts, to season this world with the love that he has given you to share. He has made us to be a blessing to each other and to those around us.

But we don't always act that way, do we? Instead of being filled with the love of Christ we are filled with other things. We take in so much of these other fillers, the other

garbage and useless things of this world, and when we add that to our sinful nature we become so bloated with these things that we are unable to do what we were made to do. Instead of love and light we are filled with darkness and sin and that shows in our lives. We act out in anger, and hate, and lust, and greed. We think and act selfishly and often we do whatever we feel like doing with no regard for what God says and no regard for what how this effects those around us.

As a Christian what kind of message does it send to those around us when we fail to control our anger, when we fail to control our tongue? What kind of message does it send when we fail to honor God's gift of marriage as God tells us to in his word? What kind of message does it send to our children and our neighbors when we fail to control our use of alcohol? What kind of message does it send to our fellow believers and our unbelieving neighbors when we gossip and cheat, or when we are just flat out mean to others? What kind of Christian are we if our actions make it seem that we don't seem to care what Christ says about how we are to live our life? What kind of Christian are we if we don't think about how our words, and actions, and doctrinal beliefs will affect those around us or how our words and actions will affect the next generation? This is the concern that our Savior expresses with this warning and the rebuke. ***19 Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven,***

But what happens when the opposite is true? What happens when we do care; when we do pay attention? What happens when we listen and follow God's command? What happens when we are kind and loving? What happens when we resist our sinful impulses, deny ourselves, and treat others with kindness and respect like our Savior did? What happens when we as Christians refuse to treat God's Word as a buffet in which we can pick and choose different teachings but instead we care about everything that God's Word says and strive to know his Word and live according to his will? What happens? Jesus tells us. We stand out. We shine out like a light on the stand. We stand out like a city on hill, and others can't help but see us. They may even take notice and wonder more about our God who we gladly serve. We stand out and our children and the next generation are properly taught what God's will is and how we are to live in accordance with God's commands. We are salt and light, and God is pleased and God is glorified. And so Jesus encourages his disciples with these words, ***but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*** This is what God wants us to do. This is what God created us to do.

When we give of our time to study God's Word, when we regularly go to worship friends and neighbors may notice. They may notice that we leave the house every Sunday around the same time. When we worship God not only within the four walls of church, but also when we worship him by obeying him and honoring him when we are out among friends and neighbors and co-workers, people may see what God made us to do and his love that fills us. We are like that light on stand. When we live in accordance with God's commands stand out as being kind and caring and loving, obedient and gracious. In a world that can be so full of selfish and uncaring and disobedient people we can serve as that important light that God has called us to be. He wants to put us up on that stand and

give light to the whole house, the whole world, so that others may feel and know and see the love of Christ in the things that we do.

We are light. God has created us to shine; and his word serves to help us and show us how. We shine; we stand out as different when we listen to his Word. Jesus reminds us of the importance of this obedience that goes hand in hand with our faith when he says to his disciples, <sup>17</sup> ***“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. <sup>18</sup>I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*** No one could be righteous by observing the Law. We all sin. But Jesus has fulfilled the law perfectly in our place. He is our righteousness, and now the law does not condemn us, but it guides us as we live for him who is our Savior and substitute. When we pay close attention to God’s holy law and do what it says it makes a difference not only in our own lives, but also in the lives of others. This is important. This is our valuable calling as those saved by Jesus perfect life and death. We are to believe in Jesus and what he says. We are to follow his commands. We are to live like Jesus as we reflect his love and teach others by example what God wants us to do.

A small voice comes from the back of van with another one of those big questions. *“Why does the moon shine daddy?”* The father responds, *“Well son, the moon doesn’t actually shine. The sun reflects off its surface.”* Of course the son needs to know more and he utters that one word question that he has asked so many times before, *“Why?”* Again the father does his best to explain, *“Well the moon surface is such that the light from the sun bounces off its surface and it looks like it is shining?”* After a few more attempts to explain this fascinating phenomenon, finally the father has nothing left to say except, *“It just does,”* or better yet, *“Well, son, God just made it that way.”*

Why should we, why do we, as Christians stand out in this world? Why do we stick up for God’s Word and defend his commands? Why do we care what the Lord has to say about how we live our lives and what things we should do and not do? Why? Well, God has made us that way. God has redeemed you for a life of joyful service. Jesus Christ has become your righteousness. He has filled you with his love. He has cleansed you and redeemed you and set you free to live for him. He has called you to be salt and light. He has made you blessed, so, dear children of God, be a blessing to those around you. Like the moon reflects the light of the sun God has made you to reflect the light of Christ. Reflect his love and resist all that spoils and corrupts. Instead be a positive influence on those around you. Be a good example for brothers and sisters and family and friends and neighbors. Use our gifts and your time to praise your God and listen to the commands of God and then do what he says. Because who knows someone that you might not even know is watching will notice and want to know more about the God that you serve. You are salt and light. You are a blessing to this world. Go and live to his glory. And if someone asks you why you live this way? You can always just say, *“That’s what God made me to do.”* Amen.