

The Church and Her Community

Matthew 5:13-16 - NCBC, August 4, 2019

Main Point: **God intends for His church to influence her community with righteousness.**

- **Like salt in the midst of decay**
 - Our communities are dying
 - Jesus has radically transformed us into salt
 - Salt preserves, and combats deterioration
- **Like light in the midst of darkness**
 - Our communities are dark
 - Jesus has radically transformed us into light
 - Light reveals and exposes truth
- **For the glory of our heavenly Father**
 - Giving others reason to praise God
 - Giving others reason to love God

Application: **Attractively use your life and your lips to shine for Christ in your community!**

- Rejoice in your new nature in Christ
- Repent of any suffocating isolation or worldliness
- Pursue creative aggressive love towards others
 - Start in your own home
 - Then on your street
 - Then in your daily relationships
 - Then in strategic community partnerships

Opening Announcements:

- **Special Exit Offering today**
- **First Prayer Service** this Weds (8/7) – All are invited!
- **Educator Appreciation Lunch** – Aug 18th, 12-1:30pm – All teachers, coaches, administrators, aids, and those involved in private and public education are invited!

<<Come Behold the Wonderous Mystery>>



Come gaze upon Christ's church this morning – it's a wonderous mystery – dead men walking, blind hearts seeing, deaf ears hearing. Yes, indeed this is a community of resurrection power and Spirit-given life.

And while we are not perfect in any way yet, we gather this morning to worship our perfect Savior who has given us life, and placed us here on earth to advance His kingdom purposes until He returns to bring us to Himself.

So let's continue our worship of God by opening our Bibles to **Matthew chapter 5**, where we find our earthly responsibilities clearly laid out for us in **verses 13-16**.



If you do not have a Bible this morning, simply raise your hand as people are coming now with Bibles for you to use. Once you receive a Bible, please prepare to read from **Matthew chapter 5**.

It is so good to be home with you after a few weeks of rest away. I'm so thankful for Pastor Scott's faithful preaching the last three weeks on the life of Gideon... what an amazing summer series!

It's such a privilege to be part of this church family – it just seems like the last couple of months we've gone from one mountain-top to another: from hiring Pastor Shaun, to VBS, to sending a team to Ecuador, to Pastor Scott's Sermon Series, to Life Group Sign-ups, and now next Sunday to,



our **Global Outreach Day** – GO Sunday!! Our elders are so excited to spend next Sunday teaching God's design for His glory among all the peoples of the world.

Please notice the different schedule – each hour will be a different speaker with a different topic, and all sessions will be here in our Family Center and live-streamed online. Please plan ahead in order to benefit from as much of the day as your schedule will allow. It's going to be a thrilling journey through the Bible in 4 short hours – you really don't want to miss any part of it as the day will build on itself as we go along to help us better understand and practice global outreach for God's glory around the world.

In many ways, next Sunday is a fitting follow-up to today's message on the church's relationship to the world, so consider today an introduction to some of the joys that we look forward to next week!

Now before we jump into **Matthew 5:13-16** let's quick review of what we've covered so far in our study of **Matthew's Gospel**:

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW				
1-3 Presentation of the King				
4-7 Proclamation of the King <i>Sermon on the Mount (5-7)</i>	8-10 Power of the King <i>Sending out the 12 Apostles (10)</i>	11-13 Rejection of the King <i>Kingdom Parables (13)</i>	14-20 Priorities of the King <i>Topsy-Turvy Values (18)</i>	21-25 Progress of the King <i>Olivet Discourse (24-25)</i>
Kingdom offered to Israel			Kingdom offered to all Nations	
26-28 Passion & Proof of the King				

Remember Matthew wrote his gospel *to reveal Jesus as King in fulfillment of God's promises*. To study Matthew is to behold King Jesus – in all His works and all His words!

In between the opening and closing sections, **Matthew** can be divided into 5 topical sections – and beginning with the works of King Jesus, and then ending with extended teaching from Jesus – the words of the King.

So today, we find ourselves back in the “Sermon on the Mount,” which is the first extended discourse of King Jesus in Matthew’s gospel.

Outline of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount	
I. Attention Getter	5:1-16
II. Main Point	5:17-7:12
<i>For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.</i>	
III. Call for Response	7:13-29

You will remember that the main point of this sermon is the character of true righteousness. King Jesus gets our attention by describing the blessedness of kingdom righteousness – showing us that no amount of human effort could ever achieve the righteousness which is characteristic of God’s kingdom. The main point of this sermon is summarized by **verse 20**,

Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom of heaven is an internal kingdom of the heart – not an external kingdom of rules and legalism. To participate in Jesus’ kingdom, you must receive the very nature of the King Himself – through repentance and faith – as a gift of His grace.

And so the Beatitudes paint a portrait of Christ-likeness – helping us to see who grace makes us on the inside. Remember – the beatitudes are not commands to obey – they are descriptions of who the King makes His subjects to be all by His saving grace!

Progression of Thought in Jesus' Beatitudes		
Poor in Spirit	Right view of Self	5:3
Mourn	Right view of Sin	5:4
Meek	Right view of Suffering	5:5
Hunger	Right view of Salvation	5:6
Merciful	Right view of Serving	5:7
Pure	Right view of Satisfaction	5:8
Peacemaker	Right view of Shalom	5:9
Persecuted	Right view of Society	5:10

And through our 8-week study of these Beatitudes, we noted how they build on one another, giving us a right view of self, a right view of our own sin, a right view of suffering, a right view of salvation, a right view of serving, a right view of satisfaction, a right view of shalom, and a right view of society.

Interestingly, the more we reflect Christ's righteousness towards others, the more we are hated and persecuted. **Verses 10-12** focused on how Christ's disciples should expect to be treated by this world. Now today, **verses 13-16** reverse the focus, and tell us how Christ's disciples should treat the world. How should the church respond to her community who is depraved and dark? How does the King want His subjects to respond to those who persecute and despise them?

We find the answer clearly stated for us today in **Matthew 5, verse 13-16**.



Please stand in honor of the public reading of God's Word as I read from **Matthew 5, verses 13-16**, in the English Standard Translation:

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. 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.

This is God's Word. Please be seated.

Let's Pray.

What if you walked into class on exam day only to discover that you studied the wrong chapter? What if you walked into the board room at work – ready to give the presentation your team has spent the last year preparing, only to realize that your board is expecting a different presentation on a different product? What if you stood

before King Jesus only to learn that He had a different purpose for your earthly life than what you actually lived?

I believe it's possible that many Christians and Churches are unwittingly ignoring the very purpose for which Christ has them on this earth!

We must not let our acquaintance with these verses mute their profound truth. I have been convicted about my own priorities as I've considered these verses afresh. It's far too easy for me to focus all my energies on other Christians. But these verses are clear:



God intends for His church to influence her community with righteousness. God expects us – every one of His disciples – to be agents of redemption – the salt and light of the world.

The *You* in **verses 13 and 14** is emphatic and plural. Referring to the collection of all Christ-followers together. Every person whom He indwells and makes righteous, He intends to use publicly – visibly – influentially for His glory with the spiritually dead and blind.

In other words, what Jesus is saying in context here, is that it is impossible to live out the beatitudes in a purely private way that doesn't attract the attention of this world – either for their salvation or for our persecution.¹

So listen carefully – God never calls us to isolate or withdraw from sinners. To hide in a church house as an angry or scared group who only engage with sinners when absolutely necessary, and then only with grave suspicion or judgment. No. The defining purpose of the church is never to preserve itself or condemn the world! These verses call us to glorify God by fully engaging with our culture without ever being compromised by it.

So consider this question, *If God raptured us today, would any of our unbelieving neighbors notice or even care that we were gone?*² Do you really love the sinners in your community? On your street? In your influence?

The King's character in you has a public purpose and a public responsibility towards the lost.³ We are not *of* the world, but we are sent *into* the world.

Jesus uses two metaphors here to teach how a believer's union with Christ supernaturally makes them influential as the salt and the light of the world.

¹ 2 Corinthians 4:14-16

² I'm indebted to Pastor Steve Viars' conference message, "A Church Who Loves Her Community" for these questions and much of the thoughts of this sermon. I highly recommend this sermon for your consideration, as listed in the recommended resources at the end of this document.

³ John 17:14-19; c.f.

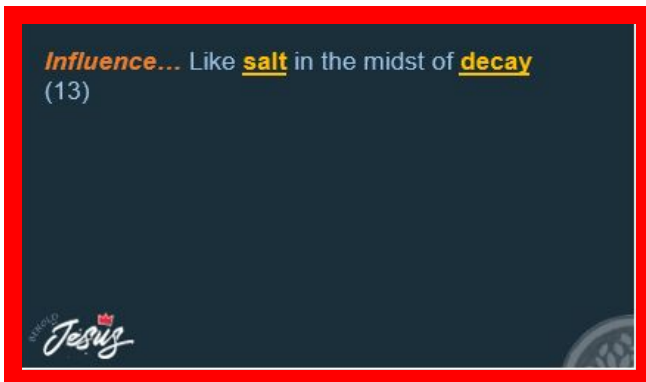
<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/lets-revise-the-popular-phrase-in-but-not-of>

Now in order to be useful, both salt and light have to be radically different from whatever they influence. In fact it is their essential distinction from their surroundings that gives them their powerful influence.

So from **verses 3-12** we can understand that our union with Christ by faith in His death and resurrection – our possession of His imputed righteousness – is our most essential and important characteristic. And it is this essential righteousness that relates to both salt and light in this passage.

In other words, your usefulness requires Christ’s righteousness. If salt loses its saltiness, or if a light gets covered, they are useless. Likewise, we are useless for God’s earthly purposes if we do not possess the righteousness of Christ.

God made us righteous so that together we might influence our community as salt and light. Let’s be sure we’ve not shifted from God’s earthly mission for us here.



First, God intends for His church to influence her community **Like salt in the midst of decay**

Verse 13 reads, “*You are the salt of the earth...*”

Notice Jesus doesn’t say, you are the sugar of the earth, or the honey of the earth.⁴ God’s purpose for Christians on this earth is not just to sweeten up the earth. Righteousness will confront and convict by its very nature. Jesus refers to His disciples as salt – because salt works to prevent decay.

Remember biblically speaking,



Our communities are dying

Now I know someone here is saying, “My community isn’t dying! I live in Morton!!” Or “But I live in Washington!” Of course I’m not speaking of population growth, or economic vitality, or educational scores. Biblically speaking every earthly community is dying *spiritually*. Every one of our unbelieving neighbors or coworkers is

⁴ Attributed to Renee Phillips in personal conversation

dead, deaf, blind, and eternally lost in sin!⁵ The wages of sin is death,⁶ and once death starts to set in, a body starts to decompose and fall apart. We can see the effects of sin's decay all around us in our communities, right? Marriages are failing, loneliness and hate are rising, self-destruction is praised, mental health professionals can't keep up with the demands ... We live everyday in the middle of a spiritual graveyard!

But Jesus says to His disciples *You all are the salt of the earth.*



Jesus has radically transformed us into salt.

Like a scuba diver in the ocean, the believer now lives in a world that isn't compatible with his new nature in Christ.

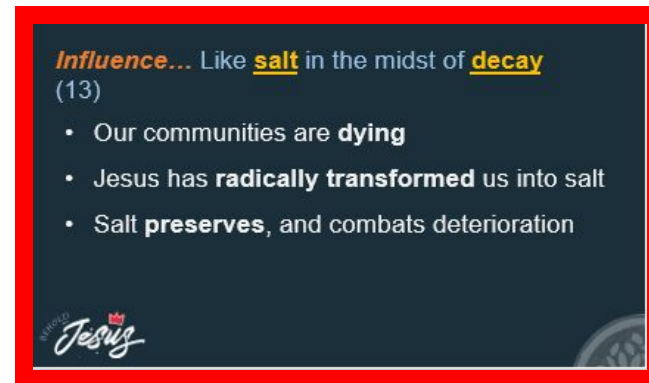
⁵ Ephesians 2:1-3; Psalm 14:1-3; John 3:19-20; Romans 3:10-12; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Timothy 3:2-9

⁶ Romans 6:23

⁷ Although we live in a spiritual graveyard, Christians are alive in Christ – we are now the righteousness of God!⁸

Consider the wonder of this! In Christ, clay has become salt. Darkness has become light! You now share in the very nature of Christ Himself in you!⁹

So like salt, how does the righteousness of Christ influence others?



Salt preserves, and combats deterioration

Before the days of refrigeration, you would rub salt into meat to preserve it, and prevent its spoilage. In the same way the righteousness of Christ in me prevents spiritual decay in others around me!

⁷ By the way, this is Jesus' point at the end of verse 13. He's saying that it's Christ's righteousness in us that gives us our purpose on the earth. If the salt loses its taste, or if we become compromised and conformed to the world, then we lose all ministry effectiveness. Verse 13 is not a statement about eternal security as much as it is a warning to not become useless to God's redemptive purposes on this earth.

⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁹ Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3

You see, true righteousness is both attractive and convicting to others.¹⁰ So when you enter a group conversation, have you ever noticed how some people will use less profanity while you're around? Or they'll awkwardly apologize for saying something they know is wrong? That's the influence of righteousness!

God desires for New Castle Bible Church to be a moral disinfectant! Through our prayers and our restraining example of Christ in us, we temporarily help some people not pursue sin as much as they would if we were gone!

Remember God had to call Lot out of Sodom before his judgment could fall on it.¹¹ Scripture teaches that once the church is raptured from the world, evil will run wild and it will only take 7 years for the world to descend into the very epitome of hell.¹²

So church – we are the salt of the earth. God intends for Christ's righteousness in us to penetrate society as a moral antiseptic – and hold back its spiritual decay. Salt can't preserve what it doesn't contact. Nor can salt preserve anything if it's so adulterated with worldliness that it is no longer different from what it is trying to influence.

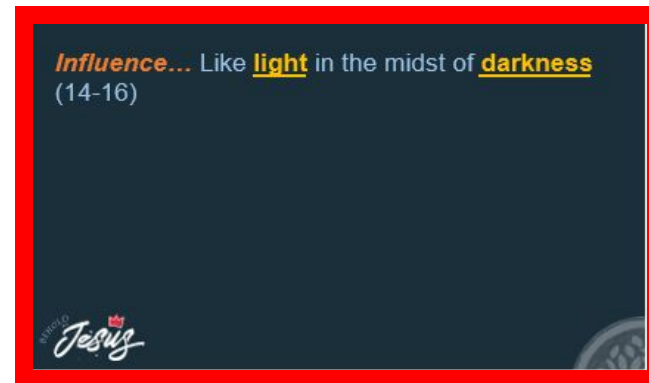
Next in **verse 14**, Jesus gives the second metaphor to answer how His disciples must relate to their adversarial world.

¹⁰ John 16:8-11

¹¹ Genesis 19:22

¹² 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Daniel 9:27; Revelation 6-19

You are the light of the world. In relationship to our community, God's church is,



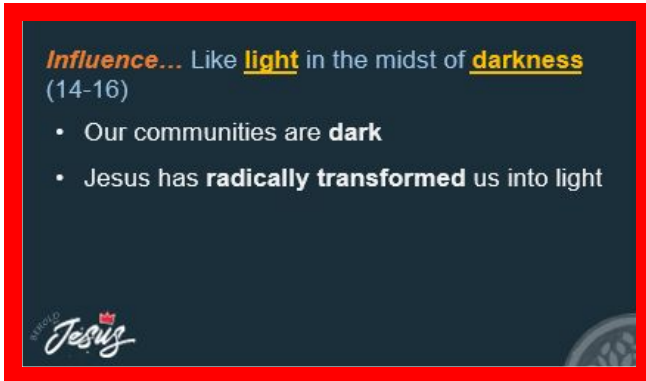
Like light in the midst of darkness

Because from God's perspective,



Our communities are dark. Biblically speaking, our neighbors are dark morally and spiritually...just like we used to be. But church – **Colossians 1:13** proclaims that,

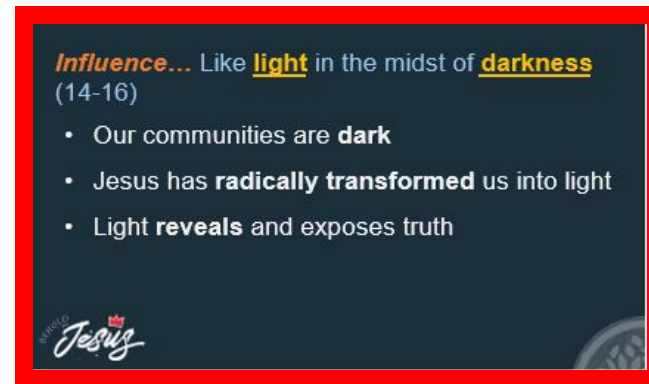
Our Heavenly Father has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son!



Jesus has radically transformed us into light!

We have been united by faith with the One who Himself is the light of the world!¹³ Our light is a borrowed light, or a reflected light – as Jesus Himself is the only true source of spiritual illumination and truth. And now that Jesus has ascended, we serve as His reflective moons – letting His character shine through us for all to see.

Ephesians 5 verse 8 urges us to *walk as children of light* – *exposing the works of darkness*.¹⁴ In other words,



Light reveals and exposes truth.

While salt has more of a negative influence by preserving society from further moral decay...light is more positive in its influence. For light exposes the true reality and guides the way towards God.

Also light can never be hidden. Its influence is more direct, and often verbal. That's why Jesus uses two examples of the obvious visibility of light. It's like *a city on a hill* – there's no possible way to hide its presence for miles around. On a dark night, even the smallest amount of light from that city will reflect off the clouds and illuminate the darkness for miles. It's like a single lamp in a small one-room house in the Ancient Near East. Only a fool would light a lamp and then cover it. A lamp is lit to be seen. And so God saved us to have an influence on this earth for righteousness ... so that we would make spiritual realities visible – using our words to point people to God that they too may know His will and be saved!

Church – **verses 14-15** are clear – there is no such thing as an invisible Christian. It is impossible for those who

¹³ John 1:7ff; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35

¹⁴ Ephesians 5:8-13

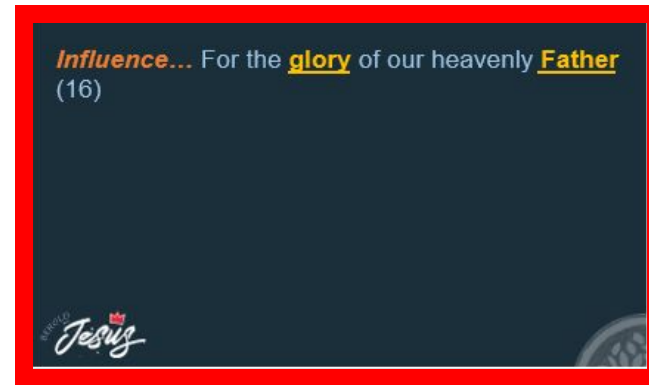
possess Christ's righteousness described in **verses 3-12** to remain unnoticed by the world.

Christians must be seen and heard by the lost. To hide our light is to live against our very nature in Christ. To fail to have any good influence on our unbelieving neighbors is to fail in our very identity and earthly mission.¹⁵

Verse 16 therefore calls us to let Christ's light shine publicly to the unbelievers around us in such a way that they may see our good works.

Now, the word "good" that is used here means beautiful, or attractive, or winsome. So letting your light shine means allowing others see the beauty that the Lord has worked in you! Allow others to encounter the supernatural righteousness of Christ Himself in you.

And of course, none of this is for your own praise or grandstanding! Rather God intends for our community influence to be,



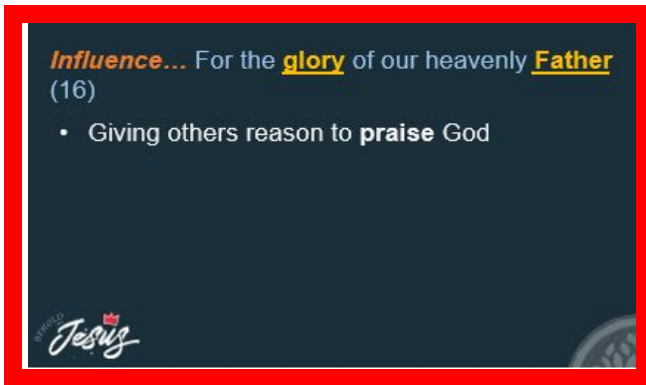
For the glory of our heavenly Father

Verse 16 says it clearly,

In the same way [as cities on hills and lamps on stands], let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

When the Spirit of God controls the born-again heart ... our life and our lips will express both the attractiveness and the holiness of our Lord. God Himself will be put on display,

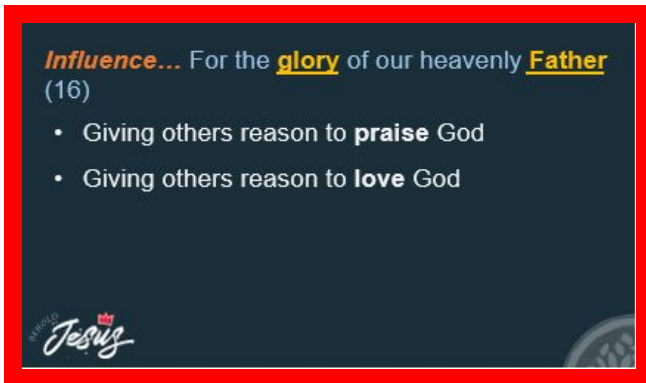
¹⁵ "Flight into the invisible is a denial of the call. A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow Him." Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 106.



Giving others reason to praise God.

You see **verse 16** is not contrary to the humility of **verse 3**. To make Christ visible is not the work of pride.

Instead it is simply fulfilling your purpose as God's Spirit-powered witnesses in this dark and dying world,



Giving others reason to love God.

After all, did you notice that Matthew refers to God as our heavenly Father in **verse 16**? This is the first reference to God as Father in this gospel, and it emphasizes the

fact that the God who dwells in heaven itself is also an intimate God of tender relationship with His children. God is Father – meaning that He is the source of all that is good.

So live and speak that others might see the manifold perfections of His nature in and through you – and thereby fulfill your purpose as the world's salt and light.

Christ's words are clear. All who have received life necessarily restrain the decay of death. And all who have received truth necessarily proclaim its beauty for all to know. By the King's own definition, this is the church's influence on her community.

So how will you respond? Are your priorities aligned with God's earthly purpose for you? Do you really love your neighbors, and are you seeking to live intentionally so that non-Christians would see Christ in you? Or have you become so immersed in the ministries of the church house that your saltiness is inaccessible to the dying, and your light is covered?

I'm so thankful for so many of you that I know in this church body who,



Attractively use your life and your lips to shine for Christ in your community! Your example has encouraged and convicted me this week as I've studied this text!

And so for all of us this morning, let's first,



Rejoice in our new nature in Christ

After all – we used to be dead and controlled by darkness! But now in Christ, we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world!!

May we be awakened this morning to our glorious privilege! It is Christ in us that we proclaim, and it is His righteousness that we share! None of this is about us. Rejoice in your new nature with Christ, and rejoice in the privilege of serving as God's mannequin upon which He can hang His glories for all the world around you to see!



Then, Repent of any suffocating isolation or worldliness.

If you have removed yourself completely from all unnecessary contact with the dying world around you, repent. If you are so afraid of being rejected or persecuted, that you no longer look any different than the world, repent. Ask God to forgive you for living for yourself, instead of for Him who died and rose again for you!¹⁶

And make sure your repentance,

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:15



Pursues creative aggressive love towards others for the greater glory of God.

You can't force or manufacture this kind of living. It's supernatural. Love for sinners is only energized by God's Spirit. Compassion for the lost is only cultivated through prayer.

Let's encourage one another to love and good works, church!¹⁷ As each grain of salt works, the decline of the entire society is delayed. And as each lamp shines brightly, the entire city is illuminated.

Certainly there are so many opportunities around us for us to creatively and actively share Christ's love.

¹⁷ Hebrews 10:24
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For example, we can **Start** by sharing the righteousness of Christ **in your own home**. For **Mark 5** reports,¹⁸ the light that shines brightly at home will reach people far away from home as well.



Then on your street.

Purpose to get to know your neighbors. Really know them and their needs. So that you might know how to practically love them. You are their salt and light.

¹⁸ Mark 5:19



Then of course **our daily relationships** with people at work, or school, or at the grocery store, or in hobby groups. Pray that God would help you to relate to them in a way that would cause them to ask, “Why did you do that for me?” Pray that God will give you creative ideas on how to share His goodness with them. Don’t be ashamed when glimpses of His righteousness in you cause others to reject you, or persecute you. You are fulfilling your calling. Pray that God will use your presence to expose dishonesty, reduce gossip, fight radical prejudice, and counter the corruption of greed and immorality. Remember the love of God for you means so much more than the fickle praise of others.

Finally, the Scripture today is calling us to pursue creative and aggressive love towards others in,



strategic community partnerships.

Church – every Christian is called to this. Not just the elders. The pastors and elders exist to help equip the saints to do the work of the ministry,¹⁹ so prayerfully and creatively seek ways in which our church family can build relationships with our community leaders in order that the lost might see how beautiful Christ is and glorify our Father which is in heaven.

There are local jails desperate for help counseling inmates. There are educational leaders longing after-school tutors. Lonely elderly long for visitation. Social workers are overwhelmed by the needs of the unemployed or the lonely and grieving. We are all surrounded by single parents desperate for some respite. Our village boards are overwhelmed by the ingratitude and entitlement of their constituents, and would welcome a voice of encouragement and an offer of help. Obviously, the opportunities are endless. I’m just trying to start your thinking. But what would happen if New Castle Bible Church – you and me – started to take

¹⁹ Ephesians 4:11-12

Matthew 5:13-16 seriously? All for God's glory, and by His power.



God intends for His church to influence her community with righteousness.

This is far deeper and more effective than any social gospel effort. Go back and review **verses 3-12**. Perhaps it would help you to review this picture of Christ's righteousness given to you every day for the rest of this month as you pray about how God desires to publicly shine His beauty to the dying and dark around you?

Certainly we are blessed – for God has made us the salt and light of this world. May He be praised as we all live for Him!

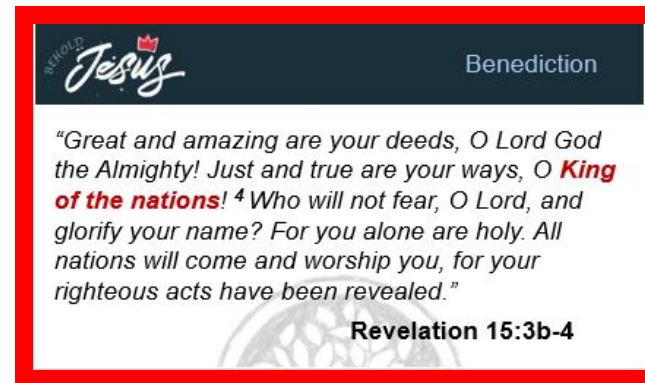


Let's pray.

<<He Leadeth Me>>

Exit Offering for AWANA Ministry

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! 4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.

Revelation 15:3b-4

- *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, Butterfield



Recommended Resources on *The Church and Her Community*:

- Proverbs 4:18
- Isaiah 60:2
- Mark 4:21; 9:50
- Luke 11:33; 14:34-35
- John 1:4-5, 9; 3:19-21; 12:46; 17:15-19
- 2 Corinthians 2:15-16; 4:3-6
- Ephesians 5:8-14
- Philippians 2:14-16
- Colossians 1:12-13
- 1 Thessalonians 5:5
- Titus 2:7; 3:14
- 1 Peter 2:9, 12

- https://www.faithlafayette.org/resources/conferenceMessages/a_church_that_loves_its_community
- <https://www.artofneighboring.com/>

- *The Art of Neighboring*, Pathak & Runyon
- *What is the Mission of the Church*, DeYoung & Gilbert
- *Everyday Church*, Chester & Timmis
- *Becoming Whole*, Fikkert & Kopic
- *The Compelling Community*, Dever & Dunlop

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Matthew 5:13. What happens when Christians become indistinguishable from the unbelievers living around them? Discuss the necessity of Christians being attractively different from the world. How can you avoid both ditches of “isolation” (5:15) and “self-righteousness” (6:1) in your posture towards the world?
2. Review Matthew 5:1-12. How do verses 13-16 fit with into the immediate context? Specifically discuss how verses 13-16 relate to the persecution of the righteous in verses 10-12.
3. Read Matthew 5:13-16. Consider Jesus’ initial audience of normal and simple Galileans just like you and me. How would they have heard His pronouncements that “You all, yes you disciples of mine alone” are the salt and light of the earth? Is this also your identity?
4. Read Philippians 2:14-16. Why is complaining so antithetical to the nature of the Christian? Why is an adversarial attitude so contrary to the Christian’s purpose on earth? Do your words on social media or with friends evidence that you’ve forgotten your purpose on this earth? Confess any sin to one another and pray for one another to live out whom God’s grace has made you to be on this earth for His glory.
5. Would your unbelieving community get darker or change for the worse if you were removed from their presence? How is God practically calling you to publicly influence your community with righteousness for His greater praise?
6. Sing together the song, “This Little Light of Mine” What stands out to you from this song’s lyrics now after this study?