The Way- Part 2

# Light the Way

## (Matthew 5:13-20)

Welcome all of you. For those of you joining us online, welcome to Christ’s Community Church. We are continuing in part two of our series “The Way” with a message entitled “Light the Way.” As we come to the gospel of Matthew, chapter four, Jesus is making a new way, he is preparing a new thing and creating a pattern for us to follow him as his disciples.

We have seen in Matthew’s gospel how Jesus overcame temptation in the wilderness before returning to Galilee where he began to preach, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” In other words, just as he had been driven into the wilderness, now he was very purposeful, he had an agenda, because he came to show us “The Way” to heaven.

“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him” (Matthew 4:18-20).

And so, from the very beginning of his ministry Jesus was creating a new path, a new way, a new pattern, saying, “If you believe in me, if you follow me, I will make you…” and he says this to a group of fishermen, “I will make you fishers of men.” In other words, “I’m going to open doors for you, I’m going to give you greater opportunities, I’m going to expand your horizons, because I’m going to make you… into something new.”

Now, as we come to Matthew chapter five, the Sermon on the Mount, we must recognize that the audience to whom Jesus is speaking is comprised of all these different kinds of people. Many of those who were following him had just been healed of all kinds of diseases, those suffering with severe pain, paralytics, those having seizures, and even the demon possessed. These were those whom he identified in the first twelve verses as those who were poor in spirit, those who were broken and mourning, those who were meek, those who were hungering and thirsting for righteousness, those who were merciful, those who were pure in heart, those who were peacemakers, and those who were persecuted and reviled because of Jesus.

And so, as we come to our text today in Matthew chapter five, beginning at verse thirteen, it quickly becomes apparent that Jesus knows something that we don’t. He says at verse thirteen,

"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” (Matthew 5:13).

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).

It is important to understand that the “you” of verse 13 and verse 14 is a second person plural which would be better translated as “you all” or “you guys.” And so, he addresses all of the people that are listed in verse five to verse twelve, those who had followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and the region across the Jordan. Now, at first glance, the people that Jesus considers to be salt and light, guides for those who are lost, for the most part have no education, training, or credentials to lead anyone anywhere. In other words, this list of people would have stood in stark contrast to the kinds of people traditionally recognized in that culture as those who had the ability and training to lead others in matters of morality and spirituality, but Jesus invites them, just as he invites all of us. He says,

“Come, follow me” (Matthew 4:19).

Just follow me, leave what you have been accustomed to, leave what you are familiar with, and break out of your lifestyle, your cycle or your pattern, so that you can be where I am. “Come, follow me,” and many of them did, they followed him in this new way, because there was a promise attached to this new way. Jesus said, “Come, follow me…”

"and I will make you" (Matthew 4:19).

In other words, “If you follow me, because you are in my presence, because we are in a relationship, I’m going to make you into something else, something new.”

Now, for many people this is a mystery, because some people will come to church, they will claim to follow Jesus, but they’re not in a relationship with him, and they have never allowed him to make them into something new. But for those who are following Jesus, those who are in a relationship with Jesus, they let Jesus make them into a new creation, and if you had seen them before they began following Jesus you would know that he is a miracle working God. Because they don’t speak the same way, they don’t think the same way, they are going on a new path, because they have allowed Jesus to make them into something better, something new improved.

In other words, he will make you into the husband or the wife you never thought you could be. If you follow him, he will make you into a person of integrity. If you follow him, he will make you walk with confidence, and he will show you how to humble yourself so that he can lift you up (1 Peter 5:6).

You see, I wasn’t always a preacher. In fact, for the first 35 years of my life I was so far from that, but when I started following Jesus, he made me into who he called me to be.

There are some of you here, some of you listening, and you are about to be made into something new, because I feel faith rising up in this place. You’re about to humble yourself under God’s mighty hand, and when you get up on that potter’s wheel, he’s going to make you, he’s going to shape you and mold you into a vessel that doesn’t look like anything that you have been through. Like when Jeremiah went down to the potter’s house and saw him working at the wheel. The Bible says,

“The pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him” (Jeremiah 18:4).

In the same way, Jesus says, “If you follow me, I will make you” and what I love about that is that “make” is a verb. In other words, he is continually making you, and so when he calls you to follow him, he will make you right there where you are. But when you step out in faith, when you follow him, you may find yourself somewhere else and he will make you again. And so, as you keep following Jesus, he’s going to keep making you, because you…

“Are being transformed into the same image (into his likeness) from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18, NKJV).

You may have thought that you would never survive in that environment, but Jesus said “Follow me, and I will make you. I will show you new things, and you won’t need any of that old stuff, that old life anymore, because you will be a product of who I am. You will be moving from glory to glory!”

And so, I tell you that in introduction, because the Holy Spirit wants you to understand how you are influential for God’s glory. Jesus uses two different metaphors in Matthew chapter five to describe your influence. First, he says,

“You are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13).

In other words, “Come follow me and I will make you… salt.” And so, what does that mean, what does salt do?

Well, in those days, salt was used for a variety of purposes. Salt was used to add flavor to food. Salt was used to preserve meat. Salt was believed to have healing properties. And it was also considered a symbol of purity and therefore it was often used in religious rituals and ceremonies. And so, salt was considered a valuable commodity in ancient times.

With all of that in mind, it would have been a great complement from Jesus to be called, “The salt of the earth.” Because that would have been a great encouragement to hear from the Lord, that you are valuable, you are useful, and you are important, in a culture that often pushed aside those who were poor in spirit, meek, persecuted and reviled. But instead of pushing these people aside, Jesus tells them, “You are necessary and needed.”

If that wasn’t enough, Jesus added to that and said,

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14).

“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” (Matthew 5:15).

In other words, Jesus is the source of your light, and so as you follow him, reflecting the teachings of Jesus, he is making you light. And so, those who were there on that mountainside and by extension all believers have the responsibility to reflect the light of God’s love and salvation to others. And that light is made to keep on shining because it is never overcome by darkness.

Now, in that culture where only the religious elites are given this responsibility, this must have been a shocking statement, but Jesus reiterated the statement saying,

“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

And so, this second metaphor of light brings a sense of purpose and direction to his disciples emphasizing that they are to be a visible presence in the world, not hiding their faith, not having a personal faith, not keeping it to themselves, but to let it shine and be known everywhere.

The apostle Paul seizing this imagery says,

“So that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe…” (Philippians 2:15-16).

And so, Jesus is calling his disciples both then and now to be influencers, salt and light in the world, as the prophet Daniel says,

“Shining like the brightness of the heavens and leading many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).

Now, our culture has hijacked the term influencer, but when I was growing up an influencer was a positive role model, often a teacher, a coach, a fireman, a police officer, or a pastor. And yet today, many people would say an influencer is a celebrity, maybe an athlete, or someone who has a large number of followers on social media, without any consideration of their moral failures. But that is not a true representative of the type of influencer Jesus calls us to be.

You see, long before we began to recognize drastic changes in our culture, long before we began to see the influence of progressives, socialists, and those on the far left who are pushing their right to be sexually immoral. Long before all of that, Jesus said that you and I are an influential part of his kingdom. He said,

“You are the salt of the earth… You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13-14).

And so, as followers of Jesus, as the body of Christ, we are heirs of a 2000-year tradition of proclaiming God’s word. The Scriptures say we are…

“To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8).

Like that great cloud of witnesses that has gone before us in the faith, as followers of Jesus we are called to influence our culture, fleeing from idolatry, resisting hatred, seeking justice, showing compassion to the poor, and standing up for the sanctity of life. And yet, it seems that today, more and more, that a biblical worldview, or the Christian point of view has become clouded, confused, and more difficult to navigate. But the Holy Spirit was very clear, telling us point blank:

“Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

However, many followers of Jesus enter into contracts, partnerships, and covenants with unbelievers as if this were merely a suggestion and that there was some great attraction or commonality with darkness. It’s almost as if many of us believe that Jesus sat down on the mountainside and said, “Who would like to be the light of the world?” Just waiting for someone to volunteer, but Jesus didn’t say that, and he didn’t mean that, but he said very clearly,

“You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).

And so, this wasn’t a suggestion, it wasn’t a multiple-choice question, the only option we have as followers of Jesus is whether or not we are going to let our light shine as Jesus intended for us to shine. That is why he said,

“No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house” (Matthew 5:15, NLT).

And so, are you a light, are you a lamp on a stand? That’s what Jesus meant to make you, that’s what he intended for you if you are a follower of Jesus. The Holy Spirit confirms this saying,

“God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

And so, the only reason Jesus lights our lamp and keeps it burning is so that we may be the light of the world. That’s what the psalmist declared,

“You, O Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light” (Psalms 18:28).

Jesus said, “Come follow me, and I will make you.” In other words, he didn’t say, “You’ve got great potential, try your best to be the light of the world.” No, he said, “You are the light of the world.”

However, we must acknowledge that it is entirely possible for us to both lose our saltiness and to hide our lights. In fact, Jesus warned them on that mountainside saying,

“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” (Matthew 5:13).

When Jesus gave this message on the mountain, he was talking to ordinary people just like you and me, and his intentions never changed. He intends for us to rise to the top, to be people of influence, a positive and godly influence, a light in a dark place.

I believe the Spirit of God wants you to see yourself in a new way, seeing yourself as God sees you, recognizing that you are an influencer, called to be salt and light in this world, and demonstrating the love of God, day in and day out. And so, where can you shine this week? Where can you encourage others, pointing them to the gospel, loving them like Jesus loved them?

These are questions that we would be wise to keep at the front of our minds as we follow Jesus through life, because he is the fulfillment of Scripture,

“He is the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

He is the promise of the Father come to life, raised from the dead, interceding for you at the right hand of the Father, and even now he is calling you saying,

"Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

You may only be one, but you are one, and your life can make a difference, a little of your influence can go a long way, because you are salt, and you are light.

Before we close, I want to read the last section of Scripture, and make a concluding application. Jesus said in verse seventeen,

"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. 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” (Matthew 5:17-18).

“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” (Matthew 5:19).

“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” (Matthew 5:20).

Going back to verse eighteen, Jesus said, “Not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” Meaning that he will finish the job he came to do, he will see it all the way through to the end. As he said through the prophet Isaiah,

“So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11, NKJV).

And so, Jesus is still lighting the way, he is still building his church, and he is still calling the poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the hungry and thirsty, those who are persecuted and reviled. He is calling all of us and he is making us fishers of men.

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

In other words, the Scripture says,

“He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (2 Corinthians 5:19-20).

And so, today, you might be the only Christian in your family, the only Christian on your job, the only Christian in your school, or the only Christian in your neighborhood, but wherever you are today, you have been put there by the Lord to be a godly influence and to lead people to him. You are an influencer representing the Lord Jesus just by the way you carry yourself, the way that you worship, by who you are and whose you are. Jesus has called you to be salt and light, he’s making you salt and light, and so you can be a powerful influence wherever you are.

As we close, I want to encourage you not to let cultures definition of influence rob you from God’s calling to follow him and be salt and light. And so, wherever you find yourself today, let your salt do what it does, be salty. And let your light shine brightly, be shiny and expose the darkness, because God has created you to influence others and glorify him.

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